



# Northumberland

## County Council

To all Town and Parish Councils

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:** LTP 2026-27

**Enquiries to:** Highways Programme

**Email:** [HighwaysProgramme@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:HighwaysProgramme@northumberland.gov.uk)

**Date:** 6 August 2025

Dear Colleague

### **Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Programme 2026-27 to 2028/29**

As you will be aware I have been appointed as the new portfolio holder for Highways at Northumberland County Council. As such I have responsibility for the development of the Council's Local Transport Plan capital programme. The highway network in Northumberland is over 5,200 km long and valued at over £5.8 Billion. It is the largest asset for which the Council is responsible. Ensuring a safe, reliable and resilient highway network is fundamental to the economic success and social well-being of the county and we want to ensure this extensive asset is managed in the most effective and efficient way and continues to support the delivery of the Council's key corporate objectives of: Driving Economic Growth, Tackling Inequalities and Delivering Value for Money. In addition, the management, maintenance and improvement of the highways asset has a key role to play in supporting the Council's achievement of its environmental and sustainability targets – both through the adoption of less carbon intensive maintenance and construction techniques and investment to support increased uptake of active travel, public transport and more reliable journey times.

It is therefore essential that the process for developing the Council's LTP capital programme is designed so that it supports the delivery of the Council's key corporate objectives and those of the NE Local Transport Plan, follows a robust asset management approach, takes into consideration the views and feedback of key stakeholders over priorities for highways and transport improvements, and facilitates the efficient and effective implementation of a major programme of works to the highway network to achieve best VFM.

As the former Chair of Wooler Parish Council and still being a parish councillor in addition to being a County Councillor, I'm aware that the current annual LTP process can be a frustrating one with many priorities being put forward that don't then get into the final LTP programme. Whilst there will always be more priorities than funds available to deliver them all, I am committed to improving transparency and stakeholder understanding over how the process works, how priorities are scored and evaluated and how you can select priorities for consideration that have the best chance possible of being selected for inclusion in the LTP programme and actually being delivered. I am also aware that a great deal of work goes into the development of the annual programme by NCC staff, that it is heavily over-subscribed



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when compared to the funding available which results in many T&PC being disappointed with the outcome, and for those schemes which are successful the very compressed timeframe for undertaking design, development, engagement and construction activity places significant resource and capacity pressures within the Highways service to deliver what is a large and complex capital programme within a relatively short timeframe.

As the new portfolio holder, I have discussed with our Highways team and other colleagues how best we can address these issues and improve the LTP process and its outcomes. Having listened to their feedback and to deliver improvements as quickly as possible, I want to pilot a different, more strategic approach, to the development and delivery of the LTP programme. This will involve moving from a 1-year LTP programme to a 3-year LTP programme, which I believe will enable us to deliver the following improvements:-

- Greater certainty for stakeholders over what is being delivered and when, and with more of the priorities submitted making it into the overall programme
- More time to undertake member and community engagement over schemes, design amendments & feedback to ensure we get the best possible design solutions to address the issues being raised
- Improved cost efficiency and VFM from our capital funding
- More effective programming of works and management of supply chains
- Improved operational performance and reduced disruption to highway network users

We will therefore be sending a letter out to you shortly from the Highways Programme team to invite you to submit 3 priorities per parish council for consideration for inclusion in a 3-year LTP programme covering the period 2026/27-2028/29. The letter will also include some guidance on the LTP process and in addition we will be running a series of training workshops at locations across the county during September with the aim of improving your understanding of how the LTP process will be developed and how priorities are evaluated and scored, so that you can make more informed decisions about which priorities you choose to submit.

It is my intention to ensure the 3-year LTP programme is agreed by March 2026 as per normal timeframes, so that we can progress its timely delivery from 1st April 2026. I will also ensure that we seek your feedback on how the development and delivery of the LTP programme is working, with formal reviews at the end of year 1 and year 2 of the programme.

I would like to ask you to share this email with all councillors and to look out for the letter that will be coming to you soon inviting your council to submit your highways and transport priorities to be considered for inclusion in the LTP programme, and to provide details of the LTP workshops that will help improve your understanding of the process and provide an opportunity to raise any queries/questions that you may have. I will also be attending the



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forthcoming Town and Parish Council Liaison Working Group meetings and look forward to working with you all over the coming months.

Cllr Mark Mather

Portfolio Holder for Roads and Highways



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