

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Lancaster & Morecambe Vision

Launch of a major study into an integrated transport solution for the district

Last summer, following a public consultation exercise, the Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Board published its economic vision for the district.

The Vision looks forward to a time when Lancaster & Morecambe is valued as a much more significant regional and national asset, with a distinctive and unique identity synonymous with: excellence in education; certain niche areas of the knowledge economy; heritage, rural and coastal tourism; and quality of life / work-life balance.

However, in order to achieve this Vision, there are a number of weaknesses we need to address and assets we need to much better exploit.

Fundamental amongst our weaknesses is our inability to move around the District with ease, caused primarily by congestion and inadequate public transport. Paul Wellings, Vice Chancellor of the University and Chair of the Vision Board expanded upon this saying "Until Morecambe becomes more accessible to businesses, residents and visitors, its economy will not take off. Until the people of Lancaster and Morecambe are able to move with ease between the two urban centres, the district will remain divided and opportunities for work will not be fairly distributed. And until congestion in Lancaster city centre is alleviated, Lancaster will struggle to justify its claim to be a quality, attractive location to live, work, establish businesses, shop and visit."

The Morecambe/Heysham-M6 link road will better connect those areas on the Morecambe side of the River Lune and notably the Port to the regional and national motorway networks. It will also free up road space within Lancaster City centre and between Morecambe and Lancaster. However this development alone will not address all of our internal movement needs. Catherine Potter, Manager of Lancaster & Morecambe Vision stated “Rather than allowing this road space to fill back up to present levels of congestion, it is imperative that we implement a range of complementary transport and traffic measures to ensure that the district remains permanently free of congestion. In an age where global warming is high on the agenda, this could also be an opportunity to reduce our dependence on the car and implement innovative and attractive public transport solutions.”

Determining a realistic but ambitious transport masterplan and strategy for the district requires considerable expertise in this sector, detailed knowledge of how different models have been successful elsewhere in the UK, Europe and beyond, and an understanding of the ‘art of the possible’ in terms of what realistically can be funded.

Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Board, together with Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council and the North West Regional Development Agency are jointly funding and commissioning a major study into the complementary transport and traffic initiatives we need to implement to achieve our ambitious Vision for the district. Faber Maunsell, one of the UK’s most experienced and respected transport consultancies, has been appointed to undertake this important piece of work, which will take 9 months to complete.

The particular objectives of the study are:

- to substantially improve access and movement between Lancaster and Morecambe (and vice versa) – to enable the two urban centres to function as a single commercial and social entity
- to substantially alleviate congestion in Lancaster City Centre and other congestion hotspots
- to substantially improve the quality of life of local residents – addressing the urban and residential environment, air quality and the enhancement of architectural assets
- to restore public confidence in public transport
- to assist the economic development of the whole district, but particularly of Morecambe

The study will engage a great many stakeholders within the District, will use the substantial data that already exists on journeys, road usage, congestion etc, will consult the public on its recommendations and will leave no stone unturned in considering the ideal transport masterplan for the District.

Everything will be considered from park & ride/bike/walk, an ultra-light rail system, better use of existing rail track, road modifications, road closures, new bridges, congestion charging, dedicated bus routes, underground tunnels and much more. Faber Maunsell will also liaise with those parties involved in transport planning for the Castle View retail development and in the plans for the M6 link road.

Local architect, Nick Gillibrand, Chair of the Vision Board's Transport Steering Group stated "This is an exciting and critically important initiative. For the first time in recent years we will have an overall transport and traffic masterplan for the District. All transport and traffic developments need to be considered as part of a greater whole, rather than as isolated developments and this masterplan will become the blueprint for doing so. We are grateful for the support of Lancashire County Council and the North West Development Agency for funding this study, both parties being well aware that the cost of implementing its recommendations is likely to be substantial."

For further information and enquiries please contact Catherine Potter on cpotter@lancaster-morecambe-vision.org

Copies of the Vision can be picked up at Morecambe and Lancaster Town Halls and at Palatine Hall. The Vision can also be viewed on-line at www.ilovelancastermorecambe.org