
OVERVIEW OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Highways and Transport Portfolio:
 - (a) **Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor – State of Readiness Funding** – The allocation of £160,000 of funding has been approved to enable the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor to be completed to the required State of Readiness to enable construction to begin as soon as possible, should the expected government funding be committed.
 - (b) **Financial Support for Local Bus Services** – Approval was given to a course of action for the continued provision of supported local bus services from 1st January, 2006, within the resources available to the Council.
 - (c) **Darlington: A Town on the Move** – Cabinet received an update on the Darlington: A Town on the Move project, through the Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Initiative, at its meeting held on 10th January 2006. Approval was also given to the further expenditure of Department for Transport Sustainable Travel Town Funding to progress the project, subject to the evaluation of the individual initiatives.

As part of the project, the Council is working in partnership with the private bus operating companies on the expansion of an existing multi-operator weekly ticket to a scheme that also offers day and monthly tickets, with associated promotional activity.
 - (d) **Proposed Changes to Hackney Carriage Stands in the Town Centre** – Approval has been given to advertise a number of proposed changes to Hackney Carriage Stands within the Town Centre. The Pedestrian Heart scheme has changed traffic movement within the town centre and part of the design work for the scheme reviewed existing hackney carriage stand locations in relation to new traffic and parking arrangements. The changes located new ranks where there is greater demand, and resulted in a significant increase in the number of rank spaces during the evening.
 - (e) **Taxis in the Town Centre** – In response to requests from taxi operators, Cabinet approved the experimental use by hackney carriages of parts of the town centre currently used by buses, subject to audits of road safety and bus operation.
 - (f) **Land at Haughton Road** – We agreed at Cabinet on 10th January 2006, to sell back 12 square metres of land at Haughton Road, to the original owner, following a revision to the requirements for the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor.

(g) Local Transport Plan and Annual Progress Report -

- (i) In December Darlington received its assessment from the GONE and the Department for Transport of both the Annual Progress Report for 2005 and the Provisional Second Local Transport Plan. The Transport Plan was assessed to be ‘**Promising**’, with 2 of the 6 sub criteria judged to be ‘very promising’. The Department will build on these assessments when it examines the final plans due in March 2006. At that stage, it expects to assess plans into four bands, "excellent", "good", "fair" and "weak". The Annual Progress Report for 2005 was scored at **87%**. It means that the delivery of the first local transport plan in 2004/05 has been classed as “**good**”. This is a significant increase on the previous year’s APR which scored only 60% and was the twelfth best score of all transport authorities nationally and second in the region.
- (ii) The planning guideline for Local Transport funding for Darlington in 2006/07 is £1.566m. This has been adjusted to produce an **integrated transport allocation** as follows:

	2006/07 Guideline £m (i)	Plan Adjustment (ii)	APR Adjustment (iii)	2006/07 Allocation £m (i) x [1 + (ii) + (iii)]
Darlington	1.566	0%	+5%	1.644

- (iii) The planning guidelines for the plan area for future years are:

£M	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Darlington	1.456	1.457	1.454	1.447

- (iv) The maintenance allocation is confirmed as £1.125M.

(h) Cycling Demonstration Town -

- (i) The Cycling Demonstration Town programme is now underway. A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with Cycling England and a provisional programme of route improvements, concentrating on radial routes into the town centre and links to schools, leisure facilities and employment sites has been sent to the Cycling Board for discussion.
- (ii) A training event was organised by the Cycling Officer to introduce cycle audits and innovative cycle design to engineers, technicians and transport policy staff from across the Tees Valley, using experts from across the UK.
- (iii) Two pilot bicycle recycling schemes at Heathfield School and Branksome Community Centre have been completed. These are now to be rolled out to two community centres and another school.

(i) **Workplace Travel Plans -**

- (i) I attended the first meeting of DBC Travel Plan Steering Group in December 2005 to consider the review of the Council's Travel Plan.
- (ii) A Travel Plan Grant Scheme for local businesses is progressing. Terms and conditions and application forms are being designed with assistance from Economic Regeneration.
- (iii) Travel Plan Co-ordinators are to meet with the Principal of Darlington College to discuss transport issues for the new college site at Haughton Road.
- (iv) There is an agreement to fund, through Town on the Move, a Travel Plan course for Planning Officers and Traffic Managers, which will be made available to colleagues from Tees Valley Authorities.

(j) **Public Transport -**

- (i) **Darlington Concessionary Fare Travel Schemes 2006/07** – In order to address the requirements of the revised statutory concessionary fare travel scheme, Cabinet agreed to amend the standard bus pass scheme from 1st April, 2006, giving free travel on local bus services (for people aged over 60 and people with travel disabilities) to reflect the new conditions set by the Government. It was also agreed that the existing taxi voucher scheme be continued.
- (ii) **Extension of the Ring-A-Ride Service Level Agreement** – The Service Level Agreement that this Council currently has with Ring-a-Ride, to provide a transport service for people who are unable to access conventional public transport, has been extended until 31st March, 2007. As a result of consultation undertaken with various groups, the need to review the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles throughout the Council provided or funded services was highlighted, and as a result, approval was given to a review of all of the Council's accessible transport functions.
- (iii) The Pedestrian Heart liaison group had a second meeting with bus operators to discuss issues arising from the changes to the town centre traffic management. Regular meetings are programmed.
- (iv) A draft Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership agreement and Bus Quality Partnership agreement is being progressed.
- (v) Changes to Service 19 have been agreed with Arriva and will be introduced 29 January 2006.

(k) Road Safety –

- (i) Local Authorities for Beacon Status for Road Safety – the Council has been short-listed as one of 11 applicants. In November, together with officers, I met with the assessment team in Darlington. On 16 January 2006, I chaired the final stage of our bid in London. The result should be known in March.

(l) Parking -

- (i) The Cornmill car park opened in December, providing over 400 car parking spaces. It includes spaces for disabled motorists, cycle parking and motorcycle parking.

(m) Town on the Move Update -

(i) General Comments

The last couple of months have been used as a period of review of activities delivered over 2005 and planning for 2006, in particular for the delivery of a new marketing strategy, phase two of the individualised marketing programme and improvements to bus services on key routes. We have also continued to deliver a number of projects and marketing initiatives.

(ii) Marketing Strategy and Branding

The new marketing strategy, developed in partnership with Karol Marketing will be launched at the end of March 2006. The Strategy has two key aims – to encourage media interest on a local, regional, national and international scale and to inspire real action amongst residents of Darlington. Karol Marketing have also completed a media audit, developed a media pack and produced brand guidelines for the new marketing campaign. We are currently working with Steer Davies Gleave (responsible for the individualised travel marketing) and Karol Marketing to ensure continuity in the branding of all Town on the Move materials.

(iii) School Travel Plans

On 30 November 2005 around 200 pupils took part in a ‘Wheely Wednesday’ event at Abbey Junior School, one of Darlington’s ‘Bike It’ project schools.

Abbey Junior and Abbey Infant Schools have jointly funded the construction of a new access path and school gate designed to allow more direct access to cyclists using the toucan crossing installed early in 2005 on Carmel Road.

Before Christmas, I opened the 200-space cycle store at Hummersknott School and Language College. This has provided secure cycle parking for pupils trained through the Town on the Move funded advanced cycle training, (delivered by the

road safety section). Funding for the cycle storage came from the school and the Local Transport Plan.

St Augustine's Primary School have submitted their completed travel plan, we anticipate that a further six schools will have completed their travel plans by the 31 March, the 2006 DfES grant deadline.

(iv) **Information Provision – Public Transport, Walking and Cycling**

Work is in progress on the development of origin – destination bus timetable leaflets for specific residential areas and key destination points. Samples of the new timetables will be made available for comment at the next Transport Forum.

The Town on the Move website is to be upgraded and re-launched at the end of March 2006 with the new Town on the Move branding.

(v) **Public Transport Initiatives**

On the 1, 8 and 15 December 2005 (late night shopping) visitors to the town centre were able to catch a free bus home between 6:00–9:00pm and to obtain free travel advice and information from a town on the move information bus. We are waiting for information on patronage levels over the three evenings from the bus operators.

A proposal to develop joint multi-operator bus tickets is being developed. It is anticipated that these will now be introduced in April 2006.

Agreement has been reached on improvements to buses serving two bus routes in the town, services 21 and 30/31. Town on the Move is to fund the refurbishment of eleven low floor buses to be operational by the end of March 2006.

- (n) **North Road Corridor of Certainty** – Leyburn Road/Fitzwilliam Drive junction improvement complete.
- (o) **Yarm Road Corridor of Certainty** – Puffin crossing carriageway works and road markings complete. Signing awaiting completion of the Order Process.
- (p) **Central Park Northern Access** – The contract was awarded to Balfour Beatty and construction commenced on the 28 November 2005.
- (q) **A66/A67 Morton Palms Roundabout Improvement** – Public Utility diversions have been completed in advance of the main roadworks. The roadworks were due to be carried out by the Highways Agency's in-house contractor as directly awarded work but the estimate has significantly increased and the work will now be competitively tendered. It will therefore commence just before Easter.

(r) **Highway Maintenance Works** – Status of schemes as follows:

(i) The following schemes are due to commence:

- Glenfield Road – carriageway edge repair.
- Crossfield Road – carriageway patching.
- B6280 Parkgate (outside Civic Theatre & Nos 93-119) – footway refurbishment.
- Sadberge (outside Post Office) – footway refurbishment.

(ii) The following schemes are ongoing:

- B6279 Houghton Road, McMullen Road to Devonshire Road – footpath and carriageway surfacing.
- Salters Lane Phase 2 – carriageway resurfacing.
- B6280 Coniscliffe Road – deep patching.
- Sockburn Lane – deep patching.

(iii) The following schemes have been completed:

- A167 Beaumont Hill/Harrowgate Village – footpath and carriageway resurfacing.
- B6275 – A67 to B62709 – deep patching.
- Walworth Crescent – carriageway patching.

(s) **Traffic Management & Road Safety Schemes:**

(i) Leyburn Road/Fitzwilliam Drive junction improvement completed.

(ii) Newton Lane/Prior Street traffic calming - 20 mph zone to be implemented at school half term in February.

(iii) Coombe Drive traffic calming scheme is now substantially complete. There is one refuge to be completed by end March 2006.

(iv) Heighington Gateway/Safer Routes to School Scheme – roadworks complete.

- (v) Welbeck Avenue – verge hardening – works to be completed by end January 2006.
- (vi) Firthmoor Phase 3 and 4 – works order placed.
- (vii) Brinkburn Road Phase 3 (Major Street to Darrowby Drive [Hopetown House Access]) being designed in preparation for imminent consultation. To be coordinated with highway maintenance scheme.
- (viii) Sadberge Village safety and traffic concerns feasibility work – feedback to the Parish Council on 17 January 2006.
- (ix) Minor local safety schemes being investigated as follows, to be implemented by the end of March 2006 subject to satisfactory consultation -
 - Royal Oak – kerbing and island realignments.
 - Fulthorpe Avenue – signing and lining scheme.
 - Ricknall/Lodge/Lime Lane – kerbing and lining adjustments.
 - Low Middleton – signing and lining scheme.
- (x) McMullen Road Cycleway – a contractor has been appointed to carry out the works, with a programmed start date for the end of January 2006.
- (t) **Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives** – a number of initiatives have been instigated including the following:
 - (i) **Cycle Training Activities -**
 - The awareness day for LARSOA members regarding our cyclist instructor training courses took place in November. The event was well attended and well received with the majority of delegates giving it an excellent or very good rating.
 - (ii) **Nursery Education -**
 - The ongoing resources, “People Who Help Us” and “Hold my Hand” programmes are continuing in Borough and private nursery establishments.
 - (iii) **Older Residents -**
 - Age Concern and GOLD (Growing Older Living in Darlington) has organised distribution of the “SEE ME” bags and leaflets for older residents in Darlington. The campaign, part of the regional LARSOA

(Local Authorities Road Safety Officers Association) is intended to raise awareness of the dangers the darker nights can bring regarding road safety for pedestrians. We distributed approximately 1,500 bags and received many favourable comments we hope to repeat the exercise next autumn.

(iv) Pedestrian Training -

- Our first pedestrian training courses started during the week after the half term break. A total of 266 children were trained from Cockerton, Holy Family and Mowden Infant & Junior Schools

(v) High Visibility Jackets -

- The road safety team has distributed high visibility jackets to primary schools which have been donated by the “3M” company
- Because we did not receive enough jackets to give to every child priority was given to schools which took place in the first pedestrian training scheme (see above) and also any schools which enrolled in this year’s Poetry Day campaign (see below).

(vi) Poetry Day Campaign -

- Once again the road safety team invited all schools to participate in a road safety poetry day with a visiting, published poet, Bernard Young. Eleven primary schools responded and so far 9 schools have taken part with two further schools to participate in February.

(vii) Theatre in Education (TIE) -.

- This year Carmel Technology College, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College and Darlington College of Arts and technology were invited to host a new TIE project called “Pills Thrills and Automobiles.” As the name implies this play and workshop relates to driving whilst under the influence of drugs.
- At the end of the event at Darlington College of Art and Technology students were invited to witness an exercise by the crew from Darlington Fire Station. Firemen cut a volunteer out of a pre-crashed car to bring home the reality and consequences of not heeding advice given in the project.
- All three establishments were delighted with the production and would like to host the play next year, if possible.

(viii) Christmas Drink Drive Campaign -

- On Thursday 15 December 2005 a multi-departmental drink drive campaign within Darlington Borough Council was launched with help of several external agencies from the private and public sector. The aim was to highlight the effects one unit of alcohol has on a person's driving ability.
- The event was entitled 'Beautiful Cars Beastly Drink Driver' to reflect the Pantomime held in the Civic Theatre as we were supported by main members of the cast.
- External agencies supporting the campaign were the Police Force and Fire Brigade. The Wetherspoon Pub chain offered to support the event by supplying alcohol-free cocktails. The PCT also pledged their support.
- The event entailed four council departments sending a representative to each drive remote controlled cars in a course set up in the market square in a rally type situation before and after drinking one unit of alcohol.
- The volunteers who took part commented that they did not realise just how much one drink had affected them.

(u) Bridgework Schemes:

- (i) Little Stainton Bridge – tender returned and contract awarded
- (ii) Bishopton Bridge – design complete. Works order placed.
- (iii) Barmpton Bridge – detailed design ongoing.
- (iv) Leadyard Bridge – about to go out to tender this month.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Highways and Transport Portfolio