
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 – A Cycling Demonstration Town** – I chaired Darlington’s bid to become a Cycling Demonstration Town in October. The Council was successful in its bid for £1.5m from Cycling England for Darlington. The funding would be spent between October 2005 and 31 March 2008, in order to accelerate the development of a high quality network of routes for cyclists and would complement the work being carried out through the ‘Town on the Move’ initiative to promote all sustainable travel modes. Cabinet, at its meeting held on 1 November 2005, formally released that funding to enable the schemes to progress.
 - (b) **Bid for Beacon Status – Road Safety** – I am pleased to report that the Council is one of 12 local authorities shortlisted for Beacon Status in this important area. Further assessment will now take place, with a presentation due at the end of November.
 - (c) **Darlington Transport Forum** – I Chaired the meeting of the Darlington Transport Forum held on 10 October, 2005, at which progress reports were submitted on a number of issues namely:- Darlington ‘A Town on the Move; the success of the School Travel Plans; the ‘Lets Get Cracking’ initiative; and Town Centre on-street car parking. Verbal reports were also given on the Town Centre Pedestrian Heart Scheme and a number of issues in respect of Feethams together with reports on printed bus timetable information and ‘Street Scene’.
 - (d) **Travel Plans -**
 - (i) Whessoe have now moved to Morton Palms and to assist with the implementation of the travel plan two new bus stops and improvements to the footway/cycleway are being considered. These will link to the improvements for the A66 slip road.
 - (ii) The Council Travel Plan questionnaires have now been returned by 600 members of staff and are currently being analysed. A steering group is to be established with a membership drawn from across the Council, including the Union, and will meet early in December.
 - (iii) Travel Plans received and approved for Redworth Hall and Evans Easyspace (starter units) in Lingfield Way, both subject to planning permission.

- (iv) A travel plan grant has been paid to Exis Technologies at Faverdale to part fund the installation of a shower for use by staff who commute to work by bicycle.
- (e) **School Travel -**
- (i) A 200 space bike shelter was installed at Hummersknott School during the half term school holidays. Use of the shelter will operate by a pupils permit system administered by the school. The shelter was part funded through the LTP with match funding from the school.
- (ii) A designated waiting area has been created at Bishopton Redmarshall Primary School, which allows parents to collect their children away from the roadside.
- (f) **Pedestrian Heart** - Some changes to bus stop allocations for services operating towards Hummersknott and Mowden were made with effect from the 26 September 2005 as a result of requests from the public. This means that services 16, 31/31B now serve stand C in Northgate, as well as stopping in Tubwell Row. A feedback meeting was held with bus operators following the implementation of the scheme and continuing dialogue with the operators is planned during the implementation period of the scheme. The programme of works to implement the Pedestrian Heart scheme has now begun.
- (g) **Bus pass renewal and taxi vouchers** - Prepaid bus passes were issued for a six month period with effect from the 1 October 2005. The change in eligibility rules for taxi vouchers was changed with effect from the 1 October 2005 - these are now available to those over 75 or with a disability as defined by the 2000 Transport Act. A report on Tees Valley wide concessionary fares was completed in September by consultants TAS - this will be used to inform negotiations with operators with regard to introduction of local free travel for the over 60's and the disabled from April 2006.
- (h) **Bus Quality Partnership and Bus Performance Improvement Partnership** - Preliminary meetings have been held with the bus operators.
- (i) **Ring-A-Ride** - Due to an increased demand for the service an additional vehicle to operate on Wednesdays and Thursdays for a three month experiment from the 1 October 2005. This has been promoted via the Town Crier and will be monitored carefully.
- (j) **Individualised Travel Marketing** -
- (i) Steer Davies Gleave has produced a report detailing this year's programme of individualised travel marketing. Between May and August they made contact with 7,800 households, with over 4,500 households actively participating in the project.
- (ii) The contract with Steer Davies Gleave requires that a customer service survey be undertaken immediately following the contact phase of the programme.

- (iii) The customer service survey elicited feedback about the impact of the programme. 66% of participants reported the conversation to be useful, 14% reported a change in travel behaviour as a result of participating in the project. 9% of those receiving a community guide also stated that they have used the local shops/ services more often since receiving the guide. Note that although interesting this information should not be used as a guide to the effectiveness of the Individualised Travel Marketing programme, for instance there is no measure of the amount of travel behaviour change from those reporting a change.

- (k) **Repeat of Travel Research** - To obtain a clear understanding of the impact of the individualised marketing programme Socialdata have been commissioned to undertake a programme of travel research, using the same methodology employed for the baseline travel survey undertaken during the autumn of 2004. This will encompass a sample of 1000 residents living in the areas covered by the individualised marketing programme and a control sample of 500 residents living in other areas of the town. The report on this work will be available in March 2006.

- (l) **Cycle Loan Scheme** -
 - (i) Since its introduction in August 10 people have borrowed bikes and there are a further 9 on the waiting list. Those borrowing bikes have ranged from residents who were unable to cycle borrowing a bike to undergo training. (Three have completed training and are now competent cyclists and three are still undergoing training); Darlington Borough Council staff who are considering buying bikes to commute and a resident who on the advice of his GP has been has taken to cycling to help his recovery from a long term illness.

 - (ii) Darlington PCT also borrowed a bike on a long term basis for staff to use to get to meetings.

 - (iii) Although the cycle loan scheme involves relatively small numbers of people, it does provide an opportunity to identify community champions for cycling. An area we plan to exploit in 2006.

- (m) **Cycle Purchase for Council Employees** - Throughout October Council employees have been able to sign up to a cycle purchase scheme, operating on similar lines to the Home Computer initiative this gives staff the opportunity to purchase a bike through regular payments made from their gross salary.

- (n) **Christmas Bus Campaign** - A Christmas Bus campaign is being planned so as to coincide with the Christmas market in the town centre. This will involve free entry to a prize draw for shoppers presenting a valid bus ticket, plus free light refreshments and subject to final agreement with the bus operators a free journey home from town centre stops (between 6.00 – 9.00 pm).

- (o) **Marketing Strategy for 2006** - Karol Marketing have been engaged to prepare proposals for the 2006 Marketing Strategy.

- (p) **Walking Pack – The Primary Care Trust (PCT)** – The PCT has published a walking pack detailing a series of local Darlington walks. These have been produced with the support of Town on the Move and the Council’s Countryside Team.
- (q) **North Road Corridor of Certainty** – North Road Bus Lanes (Ring Road to Railway Bridge) traffic signing and lining scheme is complete. Leyburn Road/Fitzwilliam Drive junction improvement commenced.
- (r) **Yarm Road Corridor of Certainty** – Remaining works on Parkgate, including upgraded and realigned Puffin crossing near the Civic Theatre and the bus lane, which were postponed until completion of the roadworks on the Ring Road, have been substantially completed.
- (s) **Central Park Northern Access** – Tenders have been invited, returned and the contract has been awarded. The roadworks, which are being funded by One North East, are programmed to commence on site at the end of November this year.
- (t) **A66/A67 Morton Palms Roundabout Improvement** – Public Utility diversions are ongoing in advance of the main roadworks, which are now programmed to start immediately after the New Year holiday.
- (u) **Highway Maintenance Works** – various schemes are ongoing/due to commence/have commenced/have been carried out since the last report.
- (i) The following schemes are ongoing:
- B6279 Haughton Road, McMullen Road to Devonshire Road – footpath and carriageway surfacing.
 - A167 Beaumont Hill/Harrowgate Village - footpath and carriageway resurfacing.
- (ii) The following schemes are due to commence:
- Salters lane Phase 2 – carriageway resurfacing.
 - Yarm Road – McMullen Road to Hundens Lane – carriageway resurfacing.
 - Yarm Road – Hundens Lane to Neasham Road – carriageway and footway resurfacing.
 - Stooperdate Avenue – carriageway recycling (re-profiling and resurfacing).
 - Pierremont Avenue – carriageway recycling (re-profiling and resurfacing).

- B6280 Coniscliffe Road – deep patching.
- B6275 – A67 to B6279 – deep patching.
- Sockburn Lane – deep patching.
- Walworth Crescent – carriageway patching.

(iii) The following schemes have been completed:

- A68 West Auckland Road – deep patching.
- A167 Grange Road – footpath and carriageway resurfacing.
- A68 West Auckland Road, Spring Court South – footpath and carriageway surfacing.
- B6280 Carmel Road North – drainage works.
- St John’s Crescent (Back Lane) – patching works.

(v) Traffic Management & Road Safety Schemes:

- (i) Ongoing works to provide dropped crossings for disabled persons at various locations in the town centre. The programme of works has been developed in conjunction with Darlington Association on Disability.
- (ii) Civils works for the final phase of the Newton Lane/Prior Street traffic calming/20 mph zone –complete and 20 mph zone will be complete by the end of November.
- (iii) Construction of the traffic calming scheme on Coombe Drive almost complete.
- (iv) Argos cycleway/refuge/bus platforms works are complete.
- (v) Heighington Gateway/Safer Routes to School Scheme – Civils work substantially complete.

(w) Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives – a number of initiatives have been instigated including the following:

(i) Cycle Training Activities -

- Darlington has been officially accredited as only the fifth national cycle instructor-training provider across the country. The award ceremony took place on the 4 October 2005.

- Over 244 pupils were trained for Level 2 during the first half-term of the new academic year. 45 pupils from the new intake at Hummersknott School have been trained to the advanced course (Level 3).
- An awareness day for Local Authorities Road Safety Officers' Association (LAROSA) members regarding our cyclist instructor training courses is planned for November.

(ii) **Walk to School Week (WTSW) -**

- The theme of this year's WTSW activities was linked to trees with the intention of creating a WTSW wood for the children of Darlington at a site in South Burdon. A number of schools have volunteered to help plant saplings.
- All 29 schools participating in the WTSW scheme were given several acorns for the children to germinate. Once germinated and grown to an appropriate size the saplings may be planted in the WTSW wood or within their own school grounds as a legacy/reminder of walking to school to make the air better for all.

(iii) **Nursery Education -**

- The ongoing resources, 'People Who Help Us' and 'Hold my Hand' programmes are continuing in Borough and private nurseries.

(iv) **Older Residents -**

- Age Concern and Growing Older Living in Darlington (GOLD) have organised distribution of the 'SEE ME' bags and leaflets for older residents in Darlington. The campaign, part of the regional LAROSA is intended to raise awareness of the dangers the darker nights can bring regarding road safety for pedestrians.

(v) **Pedestrian Training -**

- The pedestrian training project is in its development phase.
- Twenty pedestrian trainers have been recruited and trained. All primary schools have been contacted and the majority of schools have signed up to joining the scheme.
- The first pilot courses started after the half term break at Cockerton, Holy Family, Mowden Infant & Junior schools. Another seven schools will take part in January.

(vi) **Theatre in Education -**

- The theatre in education programme has started with ‘Too Much Punch for Judy’ which deals with drinking and driving and ‘Drive Time’ which aims to raise awareness of young driver/passenger behaviour.

(vii) **Wise Drive -**

- Once again the road safety team supported this multi-agency event by hosting a workshop at Police Headquarters, Durham forging valuable links with schools.

(viii) **Radio Campaigns -**

- As part of the regional LAROSA group, Darlington part funded two radio campaigns, one related to driving under the influence of drugs and the other requesting to ‘watch out there are children about’.

(x) **Bridgework Schemes:**

- (i) A167 Oxneyfield Bridge –complete.
- (ii) Little Stainton Bridge – out to tender.
- (iii) Bishopton Bridge – detailed design ongoing.
- (iv) Barmpton Bridge – detailed design ongoing.
- (v) Leadyard Bridge – Tender Documentation being prepared.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Highways and Transport Portfolio