
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** – £12.04 million was formally released by Cabinet at its meeting held on 10th October, 2006, for the construction of the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor scheme, subject to the upgrade of the status of the scheme, by the Department for Transport, from conditional to full approval. In order to satisfy the Highways Agency's requirement to be protected against Contractor Liability for the maximum 12 year period, approval was also given to the Highways Agency to enter into the Works Contract jointly with this Council.
 - (b) **Town Centre Car Parking** – A number of proposals were supported by Cabinet, at its meeting held on 7th November, 2006, in order to make shopping and access to other facilities within the town centre easier by car. Those measures included the introduction of a free third hour for cars parked at short stay car parks, the continuation of the current shopping initiative at the Beaumont Street car park, free parking at selected times throughout the Christmas period and the implementation of a pay by phone system.
 - (c) **Travel Plan Builder** – The Tees Valley Authorities, including Darlington, have agreed to set up a website which will help local organisations create and write a Travel Plan. It provides practical support for users who may be unaware of what a Travel Plan is or how to produce one. The site will provide a step by step approach, from explaining what a Travel Plan is, informing of the stages and helping the users to achieve their Travel Plan over a period of time.

It will also allow the Local Authorities to monitor progress on the plans. The Travel Plan Builder concept has previously been tested and successfully introduced across the Tyne and Wear region. It is hoped that the Tees Valley site will be up and running by Christmas.
 - (d) **Travel Plan Guidance** - Following the successful Travel Plans Training day attended by Darlington Borough Council in June, it was agreed that some written guidance should be produced to aid planning officers and inform developers. A draft of this Guidance has now been produced by consultants Foxley Tagg and the advice provides guidance and a toolkit for developing a robust and comprehensive Travel Plan. Experience has shown that the most effective way of incorporating Travel Plans into development is to use the formal planning applications process, and this document should help to achieve that.

- (e) **Park and Ride** - Ten Transport Consultants submitted expressions of interest for the production of a study to assess the feasibility of introducing a Park & Ride scheme in Darlington. Four firms were short listed then interviewed and as a result, it was decided to appoint Atkins Transport Planning, Manchester to carry out the study. Atkins have considerable experience of carrying out such studies in Cambridgeshire, Bristol, West Midlands and Greater Belfast.
- (f) **Cycling Demonstration Town Project:**
- (i) Tom Harris MP, Under Secretary of State for Transport and Philip Darnton, Chair Cycling England visited Darlington on 2 November 2006 to see first hand the progress being made on the Cycling Demonstration Town project. They were taken on visits to Darlington College, Lingfield Point and Heathfield School. Feedback from the Department for Transport and Cycling England has been very positive and a follow up meeting with Cycling England is scheduled for the end of January.
- (ii) The School Travel survey was carried out on 20 September 2006. Results have shown a significant increase in levels of cycling. The results show that cycling to and from school has increased from 2.0% in January 2006 to 3.95% in September 2006. Walking levels have stayed stable, whilst single passenger car trip have dropped significantly.
- (iii) New directional signs have been installed along the Eastbourne cycle route from Bank Top train station to Yarm Road/McMullen Road roundabout. These signs use units of time rather than distance to emphasise how quick it is to cycle, and their use has been agreed with the Department for Transport as part of the Cycling Demonstration Town project. In addition 'reminder' signs have been added to lamp columns along the route to reassure users that they are still on the right route. This approach will be used in the rest of the town over the coming months, using colour codes for different routes to and from the town centre.
- (g) **Public Transport** - The Darlington Strategic Quality Bus Partnership and three sub groups are now meeting. The Punctuality Improvement Partnership sub-group has agreed to undertake a survey on buses travelling along North Road to assess punctuality and highlight issues causing delays along the route. The survey will be undertaken by staff from Stagecoach and Arriva as well as additional agency staff, managed by Darlington Borough Council.
- (h) **Connect Tees Valley Major Scheme Business Case** - Tees Valley JSU has now submitted this public transport scheme to the Department For Transport. The bid seeks finance to procure an integrated and improved bus network across the Tees Valley which will deliver a significant increase in accessibility and public transport use. The concept has been developed by the JSU on behalf of and in conjunction with the five Teesside Authorities and with the two main bus operators, Arriva and Stagecoach.

- (i) **Shopmobility** - The tender process for the provision of the Shopmobility service from 1 April 2007 for four years started in November.
- (j) **A66/A67 Morton Palms Roundabout Improvement** – Site work commenced on the 23 October 2006, to be completed by the end of January 2007.
- (k) **West Auckland Road/Greenbank Road/Portland Place Junction Improvement** – Detailed design in progress. Consultation about to be carried out. Projected start of construction February 2007.
- (l) **Highway Maintenance Works** - 1 highway maintenance scheme has commenced; 2 are ongoing and 2 have recently been completed.
- (m) **‘Let’s Get Cracking’** - 10 Let’s Get Cracking schemes are about to commence; 6 are ongoing and 9 have recently been completed.
- (n) **Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes:**
- (i) **Proposed Residents’ Parking Schemes:**
- **Stanhope Road Area** – Implementation due to commence 27 November 2006. The secondary orders to deal with objections have been advertised and a report relating to objections prepared for December’s meeting of Cabinet.
 - **Borough Road; Eastmount Road and Hundens Lane Areas** – Surveys and design undertaken with consultation imminent.
 - **Southend Avenue** – Surveys undertaken and preliminary design underway.
- (ii) **Taxis in Bus Lane Experiment** - monitoring exercise nearing completion and Study report being prepared.
- (iii) **Sadberge Village** – Traffic Orders have been advertised and no objections received and awaiting the completion of the legal processes.
- (iv) **Middleton St George** – Investigation and design work has been completed and the phased implementation of the works is planned to commence in December.
- (v) **Low Middleton** – Detailed design of signing and lining scheme nearing completion.
- (vi) **Firthmoor Phase 5 Traffic Calming** – Consultation complete and there are some outstanding objections which will be reported to Cabinet in January.

- (vii) **McMullen Road Cycleway** – Design ongoing and consultation being carried out on this final phase of the works.
 - (viii) **Mill Lane to Stockton Road Cyclepath** – The consultation process is complete and a flood risk assessment is being undertaken.
 - (ix) **Whinfield Area Safer Routes to School** – Residents’ concerns have been addressed and the scheme is proceeding in a revised format.
 - (x) **Branksome Safer Routes to School** – Preliminary design underway.
 - (xi) **Decriminalised Parking Enforcement** – Feasibility and preparatory work ongoing towards implementation before the end of 2007.
 - (xii) **Darlington Football Club Residents’ Parking Scheme** – Design and preparation ongoing. Final details cannot be confirmed until the Section 106 Agreement has been completed.
 - (xiii) **Longfield Road** – Now that the highway maintenance work has been carried out, the associated traffic management works are about to commence.
 - (xiv) **Heighington Car Park and Traffic Management** – Now complete.
 - (xv) **Residents’ Parking Review** – A survey has been sent to every property within all Residents’ Parking Schemes to ascertain views on the operation of their scheme and analysis of the responses is underway.
 - (xvi) **A167 Coatham Mundeville** – Construction is imminent on the safety scheme on the A167 in the vicinity of Coatham Mundeville.
 - (xvii) **Cycle England Projects** – The cycle schemes for Haughton Road; Ring Road to South Park and Valley Street to Brunswick Street have been designed and are being consulted upon.
- (o) **Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives** – A number of initiatives have been instigated, including the following:
- (i) **Cycle Training Activities**
 - Another cyclist instructor training course was held at the end of October in conjunction with Easington Primary Care Trust (PCT).
 - Another 178 Darlington year 6 children have undertaken both Level 1 & level 2 training from eleven primary schools.

- 52 students at Hummersknott School are undertaking Level three cyclist training in conjunction with the national “Bike It” initiative.
- (ii) **Pedestrian Training**
- 363 children from years 1, 2 and 3 in four primary schools in Darlington started their new pedestrian training courses in September.
- (iii) **‘Wise Drive’**
- Darlington’s Road Safety Team supported the annual Wise Drive Event, organised by the Police, held at Durham Constabulary Headquarters and provided a brake-reaction test for all the teenagers attending this multi agency event. From a road safety point of view the aim was to raise awareness of speed limits and the consequences of ignoring them.
- (iv) **Theatre in Education** - The two popular Theatre in Education Plays, aimed at year 11 students in secondary school and those in colleges, have taken place:
- Too Much Punch For Judy, which deals with drink driving issues for 15-16 year old students; and
 - Pills Thrills and Automobiles aimed at post 16 students in colleges
- (v) **Senior Safety Road Show**
- This new multi-agency event took place on the 17 October 2006. The event was designed for Darlington’s residents over the age of fifty to provide useful safety hints and tips over a wide range of issues. Darlington’s Growing Old Living in Darlington (GOLD), the Fire Service and the Road Safety Team were the main organisers with support from Durham Constabulary, Age Concern, Trading Standards, Local Motion and the Health Service. SEE ME bags were also issued as a free gift.
- (vi) **SEE ME Bags**
- The launch of this year’s pedestrian ‘Be Safe Be Seen’ campaign was held on the 3 November 2006. To raise awareness and following the same format as last year’s successful campaign, Darlington Borough Council, aided by GOLD and Durham Constabulary, will be giving away 1000 SEE ME bags to our older residents.

(vii) **Cycle Helmet Campaign**

- Darlington Borough Council is providing packs encouraging cycle helmet use by children. The packs, obtained from the Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust (BHIT) consist of a free light key ring and free competition entry form to win a mountain bike or a holiday. Durham Constabulary has given agreement for their uniformed officers to distribute the packs as a reward to youngsters spotted wearing a cycle helmet.

(viii) **School Crossing Patrols**

- The School Crossing Patroller's handbook has been rewritten in conjunction with other Local Authorities in the area.
- Vacancies for patrollers still exist and every effort is being made to recruit to the vacant posts. It is requested that Members could include the shortage on any forthcoming newsletters.

(p) **Bridgework Schemes:**

- (i) **Little Stainton Bridge** – Land entry awaited.
- (ii) **Barmpton Bridge** – Detailed design nearing completion.
- (iii) **Great Burdon Bridge** – Out to Tender (return date 7 December 2006).
- (iv) **Central House Retaining Wall** – Out to Tender (return date 7 December 2006).
- (v) **Haughton Road Cycle/Footbridge** – Scheme out to tender (return date 24 November 2006).

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Cabinet Member with Highways and Transport Portfolio