
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) **Grass Verges Review Group** – The findings of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the Grass Verges within the Borough, were supported by Cabinet at its meeting held on 20th March, 2007.
 - (b) **Extension to the Ring-A-Ride Service Level Agreement** – The Ring-A-Ride Service Level Agreement, which is operated by the Darlington and District Youth and Community Association, was further extended to 31st March, 2008. This extension is important in order to allow the provision of a wheelchair accessible transport service to continue throughout the Borough and to allow the possibility of any linkages with Adult Services transport, to be fully explored, before any decision on the way that the Ring-A-Ride Service may be delivered in the future is made.
 - (c) **Second Local Transport Expenditure 2007/08** – Following approval of this Council's Second Local Transport Plan, the expenditure allocated by the Department for Transport, to undertake the schemes contained within the Plan, was formally released by Cabinet. It was pleasing to note that the funding allocated by the Department for Transport included the sum of £0.226M, awarded to this Council for good performance. The Council was the only one in the North-East to receive an 'excellent' mark for its work delivering the first Local Transport Plan, where it achieved eight out of the nine targets that were set in the Plan.
 - (d) **Darlington Transport Forum** – I chaired the last meeting of the Darlington Transport Forum when the Project Manager for the Darlington Transport Corridor Scheme, gave an update on the scheme. A number of reports were considered including the progress of the Second Local Transport Plan Settlement; the establishment of a Strategic Quality Bus Partnership for Darlington; the Local Motion activities for 2007/08; and updates in relation to Shopmobility and Ring-A-Ride.
 - (e) **School Travel Plans** – Local schools have continued to work on their School Travel Plans, which seek to tackle traffic congestion and improve opportunities for healthier lifestyles by providing better travel choices for both students and staff. Three schools are expected to submit travel plans by the end of March, which would take the total number in Darlington with a travel plan to 21. Of the 17 remaining schools, only four have yet to express an interest in developing their plans. Six schools have been successful in applying for additional funding to promote walking to school which will attract a further £5,500 to Darlington. Surveys of work to date have shown that there are 1,000 less car trips per day as a consequence of various changes, including a drop of

6.9% in the number of parents driving one child to school by car. Cycling levels have also contributed – from 0.9% of all trips to 3.9% in the past year. I would especially mention two schools – Heathfield Primary School and Hummersknott School/Language College, where cycling levels have risen threefold and fourfold respectively in response to the work of all involved.

Work is continuing to plan for the 2007 MedalMotion event, following on from last year's success. The MedalMotion event is for all Primary Schools in Darlington and is where pupils, parents and staff try out sustainable means of transport during the campaign.

- (f) **LocalMotion** – I attended the Darlington Cycling Symposium on Saturday, 17 March 2007 which was hosted by the Darlington Cycling Campaign. Well over 50 delegates attended and heard presentations, including those from the Campaign Group and Werner Brog of Socialdata. Werner was able to reveal the latest statistics about the impact that LocalMotion is having in tackling traffic congestion, encouraging local people to have an active lifestyle and reducing CO² levels. Recent research carried out by SocialData reveals that car journeys have reduced by 6.6% across the town, with an 11.5% drop in last year's target areas (Whinfield, Albert Hill, the West End and town centre) as local people feel that they have better information to choose how to travel.

In the same areas, walking trips had increased by 24% and cycling trips by 79% (compared to 8.3% and 54% respectively across the whole town). These increases equate to 75 fewer trips by car per person per year. These reduced levels of car trips have benefits for the environment. Analysis of the research results suggest that CO² emissions locally will drop by 7.333 tonnes per year, which is the same as the carbon footprint of 1,300 average households. Fewer car trips also means less traffic noise for local people.

LocalMotion work is also proving to be very good value for money. Department for Transport research on all three sustainable travel demonstration towns, found that LocalMotion work cost 5p for every car mile saved.

(g) **Cycling Demonstration Town -**

- (i) McMullen Road Cycle Route – Improvements to the junction of McMullen Road and Haughton Road will be implemented in 2007/08.
- (ii) Haughton Road Cycle Scheme – Work commenced in February and should be complete by the end of April. This will be followed by a bridge scheme providing a safe crossing of the railway line for cyclists and pedestrians.
- (iii) The crossing point of the Ring Road at Russell Street is nearing completion.
- (iv) New Cycleway from Leadyard Bridge to Feethams Roundabout – Work is complete on the cycleway and the upgrade of the existing Pelican crossing to Toucan style for use by pedestrians and cyclists.

- (v) North Road/Askrigg Street Junction – Work is complete on changing the signals from Pelican to Toucan, which allows the east-west cycle route to cross North Road safely.
- (vi) Local Motion Research – Latest research shows that cycling has increased from 1% to 2% of all trips.
- (h) **West Auckland Road/Greenbank Road/Portland Place Junction Improvement** – Work has commenced to improve the Woodland Road/Greenbank Road junction. This will shorten the pedestrian crossing points aiding all pedestrians. The resulting shorter pedestrian phase will allow more green time to vehicles and help reduce congestion.
- (i) **‘Let’s Get Cracking’** - 11 schemes are due to commence, 7 are ongoing and 5 have recently been completed.
- (j) **Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes -**
 - (i) **Stanhope Area Residents’ Parking Scheme – Secondary Traffic Order** – The works are programmed to commence April 2007.
 - (ii) **Borough Road – East Mount Road & Hundens Lane Area** – Following the consultation and feedback, a meeting with Ward Councillors has been arranged to review the modifications.
 - (iii) **Neasham Road Area Residents’ Parking Zone** – Surveys have been undertaken and the results analysed. A scheme is being designed with a view to starting consultation in April.
 - (iv) **Casualty Reduction Strategy** – In partnership with Durham County Council and Durham Constabulary, work is ongoing to produce a strategy for reducing casualties.
- (k) **Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives** – A number of initiatives have been instigated, including the following:
 - (i) **Cycle Training Activities -**
 - One application received as a result of a recruitment campaign to replace instructors who left the pool during 2006. The candidate was successful and will be receiving training in the summer term.
 - Abbey Junior School took part in a pilot cycle training scheme in the spring term to assess the logistics of offering level 2 cycle training to year five children instead of year 6. This would be working towards the best practice suggested by the new Bikeability cycle training package launched by Cycle England on 26 March 2007.

(ii) **Pedestrian Training -**

- Following the latest recruitment campaign in February, six candidates were invited to join the pool of instructors and training will commence once relevant employment checks are completed.
- Dodmire Junior, Abbey, Heathfield and Alderman Leach Primary schools have taken part in pedestrian training during the second half of the spring term.

(iii) **Pre-School Work -**

- A total of ten presentations have been given to nursery schools and playgroups on the topic of 'People Who Help Us' since the start of the new term.

(iv) **School Work -**

- Following a series of incidents concerning children running into the road from between parked cars, the Road Safety Officer was invited to give a presentation to Key Stage 1 children at Springfield Primary school in the Education Village. The Head Teacher also agreed to start pedestrian training in the summer term for this group of children.
- A comprehensive range of posters, leaflets, workbooks and worksheets have been distributed to all primary schools within the Borough in specially commissioned Road Safety resource packs.

(v) **Mobile Phone Campaign -**

- On the 20 February 2007 new legislation was brought into force which raised penalties to motorists found using hand-held phones whilst driving. The fine was increased to £60 with the added penalty of incurring three penalty points on the driving licence.
- Darlington's Road Safety Team was invited to attend the regional launch of the publicity campaign, organised by Ian Farrimond (Government News Network North East) in Darlington Football Club.
- The Road Safety Officer gave several interviews to the press and radio stations to support the campaign.

(l) **Bridgework Schemes -**

- (i) **Little Stainton Bridge** – Construction commenced on the 19 March 2007.
- (ii) **Barmpton Bridge** – Scheme awarded. Start date 1 May 2007.

- (iii) **Great Burdon Bridge** – Work completed on time.
- (iv) **Central House Retaining Wall** – Construction commenced 19 March 2007.
- (v) **Haughton Road Cycle/Footbridge** – Scheme awarded.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Highways and Transport Portfolio