
NATIONAL STATION TRAVEL PLAN PILOT PROGRAMME

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor David Lyonette, Transport Portfolio

Responsible Director – Richard Alty, Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the Cabinet approval for the Darlington Bank Top Station Travel Plan developed as part of a national station travel plan pilot programme.

Summary

2. A report on the national station travel plan pilot programme was considered by Cabinet meeting of 9 September 2008. At that meeting Cabinet agreed that:
 - (a) the Council should participate in the National Station Travel Plan Pilot Programme;and that
 - (b) the measures identified through the development of the Travel Plan for Bank Top Station be the subject of a future report to Cabinet.
3. This report informs members on the work undertaken to develop the Station Travel Plan and sets out the proposed travel plan objectives and a draft action plan agreed with representatives from the rail industry.
4. The development and implementation of a travel plan for Bank Top Station will help to support the achievement of Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy objectives.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Members approve the Station Travel Plan.
 - (b) Members agree to the Council's participation in working with rail industry partners to deliver, subject to further consultation with affected parties the short (2009/10) and medium (2010/11) term measures identified in the travel plan.

Reason

6. The recommendation is supported as the Station Travel Plan will help to:
 - (a) Improve access and the physical environment within the Station, and on approaches to the Station.
 - (b) Enable better partnership working between the Council, rail and bus operators, potentially improving connectivity between public transport modes.

Richard Alty
Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)

Background Papers

- (i) One Darlington: Perfectly Placed
- (ii) Local Transport Plan 2006-2011
- (iii) Draft Station Travel Plan

Owen Wilson : Extension 2444

S17 Crime and Disorder	It is considered that a “Bank Top Station Travel Plan” could contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	Work to improve access to Bank Top Station will help contribute to the health and well being of residents, through promoting travel by non-car modes.
Sustainability	A “Travel Plan” will help support the Council’s objectives to encourage sustainable travel.
Diversity	Actions identified in the ‘Travel Plan’ would potentially improve access to the station for less advantaged members of the community.
Wards Affected	Initial work on the Travel Plan would have limited or no impact on Bank Top, Central and Park East wards. In the longer term potential measures identified could impact on these wards. A decision on whether to proceed with these measures would be subject to detailed consultation and further cabinet approval. Implementation of measures in identified in the travel plan would potentially impact upon residents from all wards.
Groups Affected	Potentially all users of the Station and residents/ business located on approaches to the station.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This report does not require an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The implementation of the travel plan for Bank Top Station will contribute to: Prosperous Darlington, through improving access to Darlington. Greener Darlington by encouraging sustainable travel. Safer Darlington by improving access to/from Bank Top Station.

Efficiency	Input into the implementation of the Station Travel Plan will require the input of an Officer from the Transport Policy team, estimated at 10-12 days work over the lifetime of the plan. It will be possible to recover some of the cost of this officer time from the BAPTS Interreg programme. (Reported to cabinet in October 2008).
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MAIN REPORT

Introduction

7. Darlington Bank Top Station is one of 31 Stations to have been chosen for the national station travel plan pilot programme which is currently expected to run up until the end of the 2010/11. The programme is being coordinated by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC).
8. Strong support from the train operators was essential to the selection of stations for the national pilot programme.
9. Subject to funding and agreement from the appropriate partners work on implementing measures identified within the travel plans will start to take place over the period April 2009–March 2011.

Engagement with rail passengers, residents, businesses and special interest groups

10. Work on developing the Station Travel Plan took place over the period September 2008 – March 2009, this has included:
 - (a) Meetings of the travel plan steering group, involving representatives' from the rail industry, Officers of the Council and the Cabinet member for Highways and Transport.
 - (b) An audit of the Station and approaches to the Station.
 - (c) Passenger surveys at the Station (277 surveys completed).
 - (d) An invitation to complete an online passenger survey emailed to Darlington businesses, rail season ticket holders and Local Motion club members (168 surveys completed).
 - (e) A Talking Together Event held at the Dolphin Centre plus engagement with residents via a request for comments by email and telephone. (The promotion plan for the Talking Together engagement is attached as annex 1).
 - (f) An invitation emailed through the business engagement team direct to Darlington businesses to complete an online survey asking questions on improvement to the Station and to accessing the Station. (180 responses were received from 89 businesses).
 - (g) Consultation with representatives' from Darlington Association on Disability
 - (h) Consultation with members of Darlington Cycle Forum.
 - (i) Consultation with Bank Top and Central Community Partnerships.
11. The diverse range of comments summarised in annex 2 reflect Darlington Bank Top's Station position as an important hub for rail travel, used for a variety of journey purposes though most notably an important starting point for trips to take part in leisure activities, for commuting and for business travel.
12. Key themes emerging from the findings are the perception that there is a need to improve access for all travel modes, particularly access to /from the car parking and drop off points, to improve pedestrian links into the Station and to bus stops, and to improve direct routes to the Station and interchange facilities for arrival by bus and cycle. Environmental improvements are suggested for the approaches to the Station, particularly on Parkgate and Victoria Road, and a number of comments are made about improving signage and information for travellers.

13. Responses from employers' representatives' focused primarily on car parking, notably on charges for parking and availability of space for dropping off / collecting passengers.
14. Consultation with Darlington Association on Disability highlighted a range of desired improvements to access within and to/from the Station and to how services are managed by rail industry staff.

Objectives of the Station Travel Plan

15. The four objectives of the national station travel plan pilot programme, are to:
 - (a) Reduce the mode share of car trips for travel to/from the stations in the pilot programme.
 - (b) Increase the number of rail passengers using the stations.
 - (c) Reduce the environmental impact of rail passengers travelling to/from the stations.
 - (d) Improve customer satisfaction ratings at the stations.
16. The proposed objectives of the Darlington Bank Top Station Travel Plan take into consideration both the objectives of the national pilot programme and Darlington's local strategic objectives. These are to:
 - (a) Improve rail passenger satisfaction for all passengers.
 - (b) Increase share of passengers using public transport, cycling, walking and car sharing.
 - (c) Reduce share of passengers arriving / departing as a car driver.
 - (d) Reduce share of passengers being dropped off/ collected by car.
 - (e) Increase number of passengers using station.
 - (f) Reduce growth in traffic levels (and the impact on levels of traffic congestion) on surrounding highway network.
 - (g) Improve accessibility for those without access to a car, in particular mobility impaired passengers (including parents with small children).
17. Table 3 on page 9 of the Station Travel Plan, attached as annex 3, details how performance against each of these objectives' will be measured.

Constraints

18. Implementation of some of the longer term and more significant 'hard' or infrastructure measures is dependent upon securing additional funding. This might come through the rail industry, from the public sector or result from funding released by private sector development. Timescales for securing this additional funding are at present uncertain and will too a large degree depend upon other plans and developments for land surrounding the Station, particularly the area between Parkgate / Victoria Road and the Town Centre.
19. The structure of the rail industry, bus operations and decision making with respect to rail operations presents significant challenges when trying to implement changes. Key partners in delivering the travel plan include:
 - (a) National Express – franchise holder responsible for the day to day operational management of the Station.
 - (b) Network Rail – Station land owner, including buildings, rail network and station owned car parks.

- (c) Arriva North East – main bus operator in Darlington
 - (d) Darlington Borough Council – key responsibilities in relation to the Station include highway management, planning functions and role in supporting economic growth.
20. For example significant changes to station infrastructure or policies such as the management and charging scheme for car parks require the agreement of both the rail franchise holder and network rail.
21. Changes to commercial bus services so as to improve integration with rail services are the dependent upon operational decisions by Arriva North East or another commercial operator.

Proposed actions

22. Table 11 (page 22) in the Station Travel Plan, attached as annex 3 sets out a number of proposed actions to be delivered over the next two financial years. These include measures that fall entirely within the responsibility of the rail industry, measures that need to be delivered by the Council and some measures that will require the input of more than one partner organisation.
23. Actions that require financial input through the Council would be funded through existing budgets, for example the Local Transport Plan capital programme, European funding released through the Interreg project and from the Cycling Demonstration Town programme.
24. The action plan also identifies a number of potential longer term measures. Implementation of these will require significant levels of additional funding, not currently available. These have been included so that they might inform future decision making with respect to land use changes within the area surrounding the Station or with regard to future opportunities for securing external funding.

Delivery and monitoring of the Station Travel Plan

25. It is proposed that over the period 2009-2011 bi-annual meetings of the Travel Plan steering group review progress against delivery of the measures to be delivered over the next two financial years. And that where appropriate the steering group recommend actions to deal with any slippages in delivery of individual measures.
26. Where data is available progress against performance indicators will be reviewed annually. Table 12 (page 27) in the Station Travel Plan details the monitoring to be used to measure progress against each performance indicator.

Outcome of Consultation

27. Point 10 details the type and level of engagement with passengers, residents, businesses and special interest groups. Suggestions and comments have been considered when formulating the travel plan, in particular in proposing the lists of proposed actions for improving the Station environment and access to / from the Station.
28. A local steering group involving relevant stakeholders will help to steer the implementation of the travel plan.

29. National Express has agreed to work with representatives of Darlington Association on Disability to complete a mobility audit of access routes into the Station.

ANNEX 1: TALKING TOGETHER PROMOTION PLAN

Who or where	Action person	Format	Deadline
At the Station – info stands, TIC at station. Station staff to give postcards to passengers and put under car windscreens	Owen Wilson	Postcards Posters	6 th Jan 09
Transport Forum	Sue Davison	Postcard invite	7 th Jan 09
Greener Thematic Group	Owen Wilson	Postcard invite	6 th Jan 09
Town Centre posters: Market Hall Town Hall Central House Contact Centre Library Cockerton Library Mobile Library Evolution Gold window TIC Dolphin Centre	Sue Davison	Posters at all. Postcards at receptions at Town Hall, Contact Centre, Libraries, Central House, TIC	7 th Jan 09
Local Motion database	Owen Wilson	Postcards/pdf invite to Local Motion database	6 th Jan 09
T3 database	Owen Wilson	Postcards/pdf invite to database	6 th Jan 09
Central CP meeting	Sue Davison	On CP meeting agenda (19 th Jan)	
Bank Top CP meeting	Sue Davison	On CP meeting agenda (14 th Jan)	
Businesses	Sue Davison to Nick Grewer	Postcards/pdf invite	6 th Jan 09
General Public	Sue Davison	On CWC website under Talking Together banner	23 rd Dec 08
General Public	Sue Davison	On Community Engagement diary	Done Dec 08
General Public	Sue Davison	Full page advert in Town Crier Jan 09 issue	Done Dec 08
Community Partnership database	Sue Davison	Pdf invite and hard copy Invites posted out (400 people)	5 th Jan 09
GOLD database	Sue Davison	Invites posted out(600	5 th Jan 09

		people)	
DAD	Sue Davison	Poster and postcards at reception	5 th Jan 09
Age Concern	Sue Davison	Poster and postcards at reception	5 th Jan 09
Visually and hearing impaired community	Sue Davison to Julie Lumb.	Julie to convert into appropriate formats. 485 Visually impaired database. 369 hearing impaired database. Talking Newspaper 400 listeners	Done Dec 08
DBC staff	Sue Davison	Communication Announcement	12 th Jan 09
Councillors	Democratic	Pdf invite to all members	23 rd Dec 08
General public	Sue Davison	Press release to Communications: To Northern Echo Radio TFM, Alpha & Tees	23 rd Dec 08 & 9 th Jan 09
Residents around Station Pensbury Street residents	Sue Davison	Postcards	9 th Jan 09
Businesses in Victoria Road: Drs Surgery Shops Taxi firm, Gym, Hotel, Barbers	Sue Davison	Posters	9 th Jan 09

ANNEX 2: STATION TRAVEL PLAN AUDIT AND COMMENTS COLLECTED THROUGH TALKING TOGETHER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Table 1: Key issues identified by audit	
Issue	Responsible organisation/ organisations
Difficult junction for all road users where the Station ramp joins Parkgate. Evidenced by number of road traffic accidents on Parkgate.	Darlington Borough Council
Problems with overspill car parking – particularly on Neasham Road approach.	Darlington Borough Council
Need to improve temporary motorcycle parking	National Express / Network Rail
Access to cycle parking restricted by temporary gating	National Express / Network Rail
Pedestrian footbridge from Garbutt Square in poor condition	National Express / Network Rail
No step free access from Garbutt Square to Station.	National Express / Network Rail
Poor state of décor and uninviting general ambience of pedestrian subway to Victoria Road Portico.	National Express / Network Rail
Ramp in/out of pedestrian subway to Victoria Road Portico not compliant with recommended 1:20 slope.	National Express / Network Rail
Perception of low level of lighting under Parkgate rail bridge.	Darlington Borough Council / Network Rail
Poor condition of Pensbury Street back lane	Darlington Borough Council
Directional signing within station – needs updating	National Express / Network Rail
Better directional signing to/from station	Darlington Borough Council

Table 2 –summary of comments made through Talking Together community engagement.
Bus issues
Bus connectivity between rural areas and the station, particularly for bus services that don't use Yarm Road and terminate in the town centre. Several comments were received requesting improved bus connectivity with Barnard Castle.
Lack of cross town bus routes, meaning that most passengers travelling to the station by bus must either change bus in the town centre or walk from the town centre stops.
Suggestion for improved bus interchange at Victoria Road entrance, with some form of bus turning area linking back onto Victoria Road.
Suggested shuttle bus from Station to Town Centre.
Comments about difficulty walking from Parkgate bus stops up to the Station.
Suggestion that Victoria Road portico should be developed as the main station entrance.
Walking / cycling
Need to improve pedestrian access from Neasham Road – to improve footbridge.
Sign posting to the town is poor at both Station exits.
Suggestion that town centre location plans are displayed in the Station. Also colour coded way marking to bus stops.
Would like to see better lighting on Parkgate (under the rail bridge) and also at the Victoria Road entrance.
Suggestion that cycle routes to the Station are improved, particularly a direct route from the Darlington College campus into the Station.
Can we have cycle parking at Victoria Road entrance?
Parking
Motorcycle parking needs improvement. Suggestion that part of the southbound platform be utilised for secure cycle and motorcycle parking.
Comments were made about problems with parking overspill on roads around Station.
Negative comments were made about the introduction of short stay parking charges in the Victoria Road Portico.
Station Building / platforms
When the gating is installed thought should be given to access to toilets by none travelling visitors to the Station.
Consider Station as very good for service and cleanliness.
Comment that the level of service at the Station for blind and visually impaired passengers is excellent – and hope that this continues.
Would like to see artwork promoting Darlington's rail heritage.
Several people made negative comments about the temporary gating in the station and the plans within the East Coast main line rail franchise to introduce permanent automated gates. Concerns were also raised about people being able to access the platform to 'see off' relatives / friends.
Needs to be easily accessible / visible information in the Station on local transport services.
A suggestion that additional toilet facilities be provided.
Suggestion that there should be a direct entrance onto the platforms at the Parkgate entrance, near the taxi rank.

General comments

Comment that the travel plan should have a disability impact assessment.

A suggestion was made that services on the Darlington – Bishop Auckland line should be improved, as should local connectivity to north Darlington via provision of a new local station.

Station Travel Survey of Darlington Businesses : Summary of responses to open questions

Question 10	Number of responses	Percentages
Q Please give up to five access improvements you would like to see to Darlington's Bank Top Station. This could include changes to infrastructure, improved levels of service or travel information. You may leave rows blank if you have no suggestions.		
First responses (109)		
Parking – more parking / cheaper	36	33%
Drop off points – more and no charge	16	15%
Access – improve pedestrian access from Neasham / Victoria Road & improve Parkgate junction.	17	15%
Bus - Better bus access direct to Station	4	4%
Cycle – secure parking / cycle lanes	3	3%
Staff (direct phone line / more staff)	4	4%
Information – better travel information	3	3%
Other (2 or less) – Gating / improve buildings / café / later trains	26	23%
Second responses (72)		
Drop off points – more and no charge	15	21%
Parking - cheaper / more short stay	10	14%
Taxis – move rank	4	6%
Signage – improve signs to / from Station	3	4%
Other – various (2 or less)	9	13%
Third responses (51)		
Access – improvements at Victoria Rd and top of ramp	10	20%
Drop off points – more and no charge	9	18%
Buses – better direct links	4	8%
Waiting areas – more seating / heating	4	8%
Other – various (2 or less)	24	47%
Fourth responses (18)		
Access - pedestrian Neasham road	3	17%
Other – various (2 or less)	15	83%
Fifth responses (11)		
Other – various (2 or less)	11	100%

Station Travel Survey of Employees: Summary of responses to open questions		
Question 11	Number of responses	Percentages
Please list up to 3 improvements you would like to see within the Station buildings		
First responses (74)		
Waiting areas – more seats / warmer areas	14	19%
Café – improve / improve access from platforms	6	8%
Shops – more choice / better shops	6	8%
Cleaner – improve cleaning in Station	5	7%
Gating – remove	4	5%
Tickets – more staff on counter / machines	4	5%
Information – more information on local travel	3	4%
Signage – clearer signage to/from Station	3	4%
Subway	3	4%
Other – various (2 or less)	26	35%
Second responses (34)		
Café – improve / improve access from platforms	6	18%
Waiting areas – more seats / warmer areas	4	12%
Toilets – cleaner / more for Women	4	12%
Other – various (2 or less)	7	
Third responses (13)		
Other – various (2 or less)	13	100%