

DARLINGTON TRANSPORT FORUM

4th July, 2005

PRESENT – Councillor Wallis (in the Chair).

APOLOGIES – Councillors Harker, Hartley, S.J. Jones, Lewis, S. Robson and Ruck.

Officers in Attendance – The Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration, the Transport Policy Manager and the Policy Officer – Transport Policy within the Development and Environment Department.

Representing Outside Organisations –

Alzheimers Disease Society –

J.P. Rodwell

ARRIVA North East Limited –

T. Stevens

Darlington Association on Disability –

G. Pybus

Darlington MENCAP –

M. Richardson

Darlington Senior Citizens' Association –

P. Eastwood

Darlington Taxi Owners Association –

A. Leighton

Guide Dogs for the Blind –

J. Robson

Middleton St. George Parish Council –

C. Sirrell

Motorcycle Action Group –

S. Hill

National Council of Women –

P. Dore

Rail Future –

C. Hawkes

Stagecoach North East –
D. Elphee

Independent Member –
K. Frid

4. VICE-CHAIR – RESOLVED – That Mr. J. P. Rodwell of the Alzheimer’s Association be appointed Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2005/06.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

6. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Forum held on 18th April, 2005 and 6th June, 2005.

IT WAS AGREED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18th April, 2005 be approved as a correct record and with the addition of a specific reference to pedestrian crossings on Crown Street and the approach to the library on page 2, that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th June, 2005 also be approved as a correct record.

7. MATTERS ARISING – Pursuant to Minute 61/Apr/05 it was reported that Green Bus had since gone into liquidation. The Chair reported that these services had been replaced through emergency contracts and that following a recent tender exercise would be replaced from Sunday, 10th July, 2005 for the rest of the year. The Chair also thanked the bus operators for their co-operation and the officers in the Department of Development and Environment for their work in providing a continuity of service.

8. DARLINGTON’S SECOND LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) outlining the requirements that Darlington’s second Local Transport Plan should meet in terms of Government guidance; how this relates to the wider vision for Darlington; and the consultation exercise undertaken with a full range of stakeholders for consideration whilst reading the provisional second Local Transport Plan (also previously circulated).

The Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration presented the second Local Transport Plan, for the five-year period from 2006 to 2010, to the Forum and outlined its focus on the issues that local people had identified as important including; improving peoples’ accessibility; tackling traffic congestion; making the transport network safe and secure for all; and helping people make the best travel choices.

It was reported that the focus of the second Local Transport Plan was also on the reasons why people travel and how journeys could be made easier. It was noted that the Plan would be integrated with Darlington: A Town on the Move to maximise the benefits from both the capital and revenue investment in Darlington’s transport network.

Discussion ensued on the strategic choices contained in the Plan and the difference it would make to Darlington including; increasing the use of public transport; developing sustainable modes of transport; managing traffic growth in Darlington; and promoting social inclusion through travel choices.

Further to a question raised by Darlington Taxi Owners' Association, it was noted that there were currently no plans to allow taxis to use the new bus lanes, due to the difficulty of differentiating between hackney carriage and ordinary saloon vehicles.

Particular reference was made to motorcycle use and it was reported that more secure parking and signage had been requested and would be actioned throughout this financial year. It was noted that the options in respect of car parking lockers were being explored; and a publicity campaign being developed through the Council's continuing work with the Motorcycle Action Group.

Discussion ensued on the links between transport and health in terms of access to health care facilities and it was noted that this issue was being influenced by the Transport for Health Partnership, which had been in existence for two years, and included key representatives from both Durham County and Darlington Borough Councils, as well as the Strategic Health Authority and 8 health trusts in the area.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the comments of the Forum be considered by the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee on 7th July, 2005.

(b) That a final copy of Darlington's second Local Transport Plan be made available to members of the Forum on request.

9. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS – IT WAS AGREED – That future meetings of the Transport Forum be held on 10th October, 2005; 6th February, 2006 and 24th April, 2006, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

10. QUESTIONS – Gordon Pybus, DAD referred to current consultation on the Code of Practice in relation to access to goods, facilities and services under Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act and urged public transport providers to comment on the consultation document before the end of August, 2005.

Pam Dore, National Council of Women queried the progress on the cross-town route and the changes to the junction at B&Q. The Chair reported that this development was imperative to Darlington's economic regeneration and that funding had been sought for the Eastern Transport Corridor, the outcome of which should be announced during the Summer.

With regard to the junction at Whessoe Road and North Road it was reported that the costing of the designs, previously submitted to the Forum, had proved expensive and had to a certain extent, been overtaken by more innovative ideas. It was noted that SCOOT operated traffic lights had provided a short-term engineering solution and would in time be compatible with all traffic lights on North Road.

Alex Leighton, Darlington Taxi Owners' Association referred to the traffic congestion on Whinfield Road and suggested a number of possible solutions. It was reported that there were no easy solutions to this problem and it was envisaged that the development of the Eastern Transport Corridor and more sustainable travel modes would provide some relief to Whinfield Road. The Chair stressed the need to find innovative ways to tackle transport problems and stressed the fact that road building schemes would not be funded by the Government.

Kenneth Frid, an Independent Member referred to a recent accident on Whinbush Way and asked whether any speed reduction measures were planned for the area. The Chair highlighted a variety of work that had been undertaken at the Asda junction as a result of the accident mentioned. It was also noted the second Local Transport Plan included proposals for 20 mph zones, which, following its adoption in Hull, had successfully reduced the number of those killed or injured in accidents. Residents would be consulted on any plans to introduce such measures through the second Local Transport Plan.

Tony Stevens, ARRIVA asked whether there were any plans to alter the speed humps in certain areas in the town, in particular, Skerne Park and Clifton Road, due to the difficulties experienced by low platformed vehicles. These concerns were noted and it was suggested that these local issues be considered with the Transport Policy Manager out with the meeting.

The proposals to 'build out' on the bus stands at Clifton Road were also queried and officers agreed to report back to the next meeting of the Forum.

Chris Hawkes, Rail Future (RDS) referred to the current progress on Darlington's Pedestrian Heart scheme and it was noted that the Council was about to appoint a contractor and that work had been undertaken with the bus operators and local businesses to reduce disruption. It was envisaged that the new bus routes would be in place in September, 2005.