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## OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

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### Purpose of Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Transport Portfolio.

### Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement

2. Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement - Preparatory design and consultation work has continued so that schemes may be delivered as soon as funding is granted by Government. This work included a Talking Together event on 20 January 2010 where local people were able to comment on schemes scheduled for delivery in 2010/11 as well as the project as a whole. Suggestions from the consultation exercise will be reviewed and recommendations about scheme designs made to Cabinet as required. The Government decision on funding is expected imminently on the basis of a revised four year infrastructure construction programme worth £8.951m; details of which are contained in a report to Cabinet on 2 March 2010.

### Highway & Bridge Design Schemes

3. **North Road Cycle Route Mayfair Road to Bensham Road** – A public consultation with local residents has recently concluded and the scheme is programmed to be constructed from mid March for up to 6 weeks.
4. **Great Burdon to Sadberge Cycle Route** – This scheme has been developed in two sections. The first section from Sadberge Village to Beacon Hill was completed before Christmas. The second section from A66 Little Burdon roundabout towards Great Burdon is progressing well and will be complete by the end of February.
5. **Neasham Road Toucan** – Works are progressing well and the Toucan crossing should be operational in late February/early March.
6. **Blackwell Lane to Harewood Terrace Cycle Link** – Works have commenced which will complete the Blackwell Radial Cycle Route.
7. **Middleton One Row Retaining Wall Reinstatement** – Contractors will be on site in February to undertake a further detailed ground condition assessment to finalise the design of the solution.
8. **Hutton Avenue Footbridge** – An ecology specialist has been appointed to assess the ecological impact of the proposed bridge, with specific reference to the potential impact on water vole habitat. The specialist will develop a method statement to be submitted as part of the planning application. This will control site clearance and construction processes to protect this species and encourage re-establishment following construction of the bridge.

9. **Polam Lane Footbridge** – Discussions are being held with our Conservation Officer regarding retaining and protecting historical features while complying with current safety standards.

### **Highway Maintenance Schemes**

10. **Schemes Due to Commence** - Eastmount Road Phase 2 - Footway refurbishment.

### **Impact of Adverse Weather**

11. Work continues to assess the impact the adverse weather has had on the highway network. Repairs have been undertaken at all locations where we have identified a problem that needs immediate repair for safety reasons. The identification process continues as the cold weather continues. Over 200 locations have been identified with varying degrees of remedial work.
12. Some of the repairs already undertaken may need to be revisited to provide a long term solution. The locations are being assessed at the moment to develop a prioritised programme of works. The solutions will range from full road resurfacing, part road resurfacing, patching or pothole repairs. Inspections are also being undertaken to identify where the life of road surfaces have been significantly affected to see whether any proactive treatments during the summer can prevent deterioration in potholing next winter.
13. The cost of the adverse weather is being assessed but at this point in time it is not possible to quantify the full costs. Cabinet has released an additional £100,000 to accelerate the programme and officers will consider whether the programme meets the criteria for a bid to the Department for Transport for emergency capital funding.

### **Traffic Management Schemes**

14. **Green Lane Resurfacing** - Initial works to improve drainage on Green Lane were completed in January 2010. A scheme to improve the surface of Green Lane commenced in mid February and is expected to last up to six weeks.
15. **South Park Footpath/Cycleway Link** – A new link from Henderson Street to Bedford Street is being developed through South Park. The link will replace an existing public footpath that exists around the edge of the park which suffers from periodic problems with overgrown vegetation and is not considered to be an attractive route. Planning permission was granted in December 2009 and work on site will commence in mid February and last approximately four weeks.
16. **Longfield School 20mph Zone** – Public consultation on this project commenced on 9 February 2010 closing on 26 February 2010. Road hump notifications have been advertised in the local press. The scheme will be reviewed to address any pertinent issues raised by residents.
17. **Fitzwilliam Drive/Leyburn Road Junction Improvement** - Public consultation on this project closed in January and residents' comments are currently being analysed.

18. **Circular Cycle Route** - Design work on this route was carried out in February with erection of the signs programmed for March 2010.
19. **Hackney Carriage Rank Review** – A consultation has recently been carried out on the Hackney Carriage Rank Review. All hackney carriage licence holders, town centre businesses and statutory groups such as Police and DAD have been consulted on proposed changes to taxi tanks in and around the town centre. The review arose from comments made through the Darlington Hackney Carriage and Taxi Group and the proposed changes have been reported to this group on a regular basis. Consultation closes on the 26 March 2010, after which a decision will be made on which elements of the review to take forward.

### **Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives**

20. A number of initiatives have been instigated, including the following:

- (a) **Pedestrian Training** – Pedestrian training is continuing its success story with all schools in the Borough taking part. The consent rate for this service is increasing and at present is approximately 1.3% higher than last year. As most schools have a high return rate this is exceptionally good news.
- (b) **Cyclist Training Activities** -
- (i) Bikeability level three cyclist training was undertaken at Carmel as part of the annual programme. Figures this year have increased.
  - (ii) Overall level three in secondary school has increased by 29%.
  - (iii) Level two training was timetabled in four schools: Abbey, Reid Street, Hurworth House and Polam.
  - (iv) Level two training figures have increased by 10% overall.
- (c) **School Activities** -
- (i) In January Stopwatch Theatre Company returned to Darlington to perform the annual “Chicken” Play. Five secondary schools took part in this year’s event: Branksome, Hurworth, Carmel, Longfield and St Aidan’s.
  - (ii) This year the play was sponsored by A-One Integrated Highway Services. They also provided the money to purchase flashing “Night Eyes” (and also chalk mugs: see (v) below).
  - (iii) Each pupil was given a “Night Eye” which is a flashing LED device which could be worn either as a headband/cycle aid or it could be attached to a bag etc.
  - (iv) Year 8 secondary school pupils in the Borough have been introduced to “Ghost Street.” This is a new DVD/teaching resource for pupils/teachers raising the awareness of teenagers to dangers they face on the roads. It has been made available to us as a result of Darlington’s Road Safety team working in Partnership with Newcastle City Council. Recently this resource has been

adopted by national Road Safety GB as their first official resource.

- (v) At the end of each presentation of Ghost Street a road safety mug plus a stick of chalk was given to each pupil. They were asked to design a slogan or message on the mug for their peers to promote road safety in future.
- (vi) A repeat road safety fun day was held for year one and two pupils at Raventhorpe after last year's successful event.

**(d) Older Residents' Activities -**

- (i) Following two previous successful vision screening exercises for Darlington's older residents via GOLD events involving free driver vision screening tests, Age Concern requested a similar event for their clients.
  - (ii) Quite a few residents were advised to visit their opticians to establish if a professional test indicated the need for a change in corrective lenses. Poor vision is a key factor for both pedestrians and drivers in terms of road safety.
  - (iii) As in previous exercises on completion of the test residents were given a free high visibility shopping bag.
- (e) Motorcycling Activities -** Partnership work has begun for a regional publicity and training campaign which is scheduled for the beginning of this year's motorcycling activities. Partners involved so far are from all local authorities in the North Eastern region of Road safety GB, Cumbria and North Yorkshire County Council and associated police forces which operate post-test, advanced motorcycle training programmes.

### **Council Travel Plan**

- 21. The Council's employee travel plan was taken to Corporate Management Team in January as part of a Financial Management and Efficiencies Board meeting on 28 January 2010. A presentation was also given to Senior Managers' Network on 23 February 2010 as part of a special meeting focusing on climate change.

### **School Travel Planning**

- 22. On Monday 1 March we launched Sustainable Travel Zone maps for all of the Borough's schools. The maps show 15-minute walking and cycling zones around schools in an effort to highlight that travelling sustainably need not take much time. The launch included a 'March to School' event at Heathfield school.
- 23. The Sustrans Bike It officer has been running a series of Bike It Breakfasts at the following schools: Whinfield Primary, St Teresas and Mowden Juniors. These have been combined with Dr Bike sessions to give pupils' bikes a basic check to ensure their bikes are safe to use with advice given on any essential repairs needed to make it safe.
- 24. The Sustrans Beauty and the Bike project (this is a separate project to the 'Beauty and the Bike' documentary produced by Darlington Media Group) is currently in the 2nd phase of the project at Carmel, having already had visits from The Body Shop and Darlington

College's Hairdressing faculty. The aim of this phase is to deal with the boundaries that the girls face cycling to school, to complement the Level 3 Bikeability training that the girls are receiving at school they are also having some skills sessions with the British Cycling Go Ride coach to improve bike handling. After half term, together with the Bike It officer, they are going to meet to form buddy groups to ride to school and make the journey more fun.

25. Some schools in Darlington have been looking at the importance of wearing a helmet. This has been delivered by a fun assembly using an egg helmet to show how helmets can save your head from more serious injury. To follow this up the children have been invited to take part in a poster competition with the best ones chosen from each year group receiving a Bike It goody bag.
26. The CTC has attracted three 'Bike Club' applications for the small grant scheme, with up to £2000 available per club. Applications have come from the Education Village, for an out of school road cycling club; an application for the extended schools cluster covering Hummersknott School and Skerne Park Primary and from the Youth Offending service for a bike re-cycling and maintenance scheme as a positive intervention for young offenders. Promising links have also been made with Darlovelo and the Council's Youth Service team.

### **Workplace Travel Plans**

27. At the time of writing a planning application for Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College's secure cycle shed is due to be presented to the February meeting of the planning committee. If the compound, which will accommodate 80 cycles and is being funded through the workplace travel plan budget, is approved it will be installed by April 2010.
28. Infoserve, DCSF and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College are producing travel plans with the assistance of the workplace travel plan officer. The plans are due for completion by the end of March.
29. County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust have produced a travel plan, which is due for management sign off in March 2010. The plan includes implementing the Cycling England, Cycle Guarantee Scheme and work on a programme promoting public transport, providing information and promoting bus travel in partnership with the bus operators.
30. Following the success of the Workplace Cycle Challenge which was run in June and July 2009 by CTC Challenge for Change, a 2010 challenge is being planned. The 2010 challenge will be paid for through additional funding, secured from Cycling England.
31. County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust have commissioned Sustrans to assist with their NHS Cycling Demonstration programme, which is being funded by Cycling England. Officers from the Transport Policy team have met with Sustrans to help with the development of an action plan for encouraging staff to cycle to/from the Memorial Hospital.

### **Sustainable Travel Towns Report**

32. The Department for Transport on the three sustainable travel towns, 'The Effects of Smarter Choices Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns' was published in early March. On 10 March officers took part in a web based Local Transport Planning Network Event on the

report, fielding questions on the report from UK local authorities.

33. The fifty page summary report concludes that *‘We conclude that the Sustainable Travel Towns programme was successful in reducing travel by car, and increasing the use of other modes, and that the programme offered very high value for money. The trends in the towns were different to those in other medium-sized urban areas, with respect to car, bus, walking and cycling trips per person and also with respect to changes in traffic.’*
34. The report looks at value for money of the smarter choices programme, restricting the analysis to congestion saving benefits only it states that *‘With a value of benefits to cost in the order of 4.5 for congestion benefits only, on the narrowest assumptions, and the net effect of other considerations being upwards, we are therefore confident that the Sustainable Travel Towns programme has produced very good value for money for the public spending on the measures.’*

### **Bank Top Station**

35. East Coast, the subsidiary company set up by the Department for Transport to manage the East Coast franchise have agreed to the installation of cycle and motorcycle parking at the Victoria Road entrance to the Station. This is to be situated under the Portico in an area currently used for 4 short stay car parking spaces. This area is covered by the Stations CCTV system. Suppliers have been invited to tender for installation of the parking, which is to be part funded through the LTP workplace travel plan budget and the BAPTS European Regional Development fund grant.

### **Community Rail Partnership**

36. The Community Rail Partnership has submitted an application to the Department of Transport for line designation (which allows some flexibility in the timetable). The Minister’s decision is now awaited. A survey of users and non-users of the line has been undertaken and results awaited from the survey company to inform the future marketing of the line.

### **Cycling Demonstration Town Project**

37. An event was held in early March with pupils from Dodmire School to mark the opening of the toucan crossing on Neasham Road. The toucan crossing provides an essential link for pedestrians and cyclists wishing to cross Neasham Road and improves access to Dodmire School and also the doctors surgery located on Smithfield Road.

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Transport Portfolio**