

DARLINGTON TRANSPORT FORUM

19th February, 2007

PRESENT - Councillor Wallis (in the Chair); Councillors Harker, Ruck and S. Robson.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Lawton and Lewis, and K. Fridd, J. P. Rodwell, I. Rogers and C. Sirrell.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors D. Lyonette, B Jones and F.S. Robson.

Officers in Attendance – The Assistant Director - Development and Regeneration; Transport Policy Manager; principal Transport Officer – Town on the Move; and Project Manger, Darlington Transport Corridor.

Representing Outside Organisations

Arriva North East

T. Batty

Darlington Association on Disability

G. Pybus

Darlington Cycling Campaign

M. McTimoney

Durham Constabulary

M. Straugheir

GNER

G. North

Growing Older Living in Darlington

R. Thornton (C. Ord and L. Webster also in attendance)

Guide Dogs for the Blind

J. Robson

Motorcycle Action Group

T. Hind and R. McCammon

National Council for Women

P. Dore

Stagecoach North East

D. Elphee and F. Price

Trade Union Council (TUC)

J.Clark and C. Moore

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

21. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 30th October, 2006.

IT WAS AGREED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

22. MATTERS ARISING – Pursuant to Minute 19/Oct/06, Mr Clark reported that the timetable for No. 26 Bus service was incorrect for bank holidays. The comments were noted and the Transport Policy Manager undertook to look into the matter. The Transport Policy Manager also reported that ‘Here You Are’ maps, with an index of where to catch buses to different destinations, were new in town centre bus stops.

23. DARLINGTON TRANSPORT CORRIDOR CONSTRICTION PROGRAMME – The project Manger of the Darlington Transport Corridor Constriction Programme updated the Forum in respect of the timescale of the programme and highlighted the introduction of a website, which would enable residents to track the progress of the programme, make enquires and report issues.

Clearance work had commenced, which included preventing birds from nesting and general preparation. It was anticipated that during the next couple of months the utility companies would be making the necessary diversions of piping, which would cause a minimum disruption. The major works would begin in approximately two months time and disruptions would be kept to a minimum but at peak times delays would be unavoidable.

Discussion ensued on archaeological surveys being undertaken; protecting wildlife specifically great crested newts; concerns whether the single carriageway would be able to cope with the anticipated increase in traffic and the increased number of vehicles using the carriageway. The Project Manager agreed to bring further updates of the Programme to subsequent meeting of the Forum, with detailed information as necessary.

IT WAS AGREED – That the update be noted.

24. SECOND LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN SETTLEMENT AND PROGRESS – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members of this Forum on the work of the Council to improve transport through the Second Local Transport Plan.

The submitted report highlighted the achievements of using the Local Transport Plan and other funding since 2001; the programming of future schemes; a mix of short term actions; key issues to be tackled through the Second Transport Plan, together with the financial implications involved. It was reported that the programme of works for 2007/08 was currently being drawn up and that it would be considered at a future meeting of the Forum, once agreed by full Council.

Reference was made to cycling within the Pedestrian Heart area and associated problems, which may occur. Members were advised that there was to be a trial period of six months when cyclist’s activity would be monitored and evaluated, once the work had been completed. Concerns were noted as to the new development on Commercial Street regarding car parking and increased congestion.

IT WAS AGREED – That the work of the Council and its partners be welcomed.

25. DARLINGTON STRATEGIC QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members of this Forum of the establishment of a Strategic Quality Bus Partnership for Darlington Borough.

The submitted report highlighted that an improvement in bus services in Darlington was assisting with the reduction of traffic congestion. Examples of voluntary partnership already working included, the upgrade in the quality of buses and the provision of CCTV systems on all local buses within Darlington.

Discussion ensued around the age of some of the buses in Darlington and the need for fleet renewals. It was reported that fleet investment was on the base of returns and that some buses undertaking longer journeys such as the 713 services to Durham had recently been replaced. It was noted that by 2015, buses had to have low level access in accordance with legislation, therefore, a large number of buses would be replaced. The Chair reported that regular meetings were held with bus Companies in Darlington and concerns had previously been expressed as to the age of some buses.

Reference was made to the cleanliness of the buses and whether the general conditions were monitored; it was suggested that this element could be enhanced within the Partnership objectives; although it was noted that the Partnership document made reference to quality and cleanliness.

It was reported that there was confusion around which end of bus stops the buses stopped outside the bookshop on Prebend Row, in the Town Centre and clarification was requested as to whether the bus stop was built in the correct place. It was understood that the issue had been clarified with bus operators and that the issue was around the formation and direction of the queue.

IT WAS AGREED – That the Forum note the establishment of the Darlington Strategic Quality Bus Partnership.

26. LOCAL MOTION 2007 (SUPPORT YOUR TOWN ON THE MOVE) – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting to the Forum the Local Motion activities planned for 2007/08 and findings from the most recent research on travel in Darlington.

The submitted reported outlined the key activities planned for 2007/08, which included Individualised Travel Marketing Team, 10,000 step challenge, Cycling Festivals, Medal Motion, the appointment of a Bike It Officer, School Travel Plans and the introduction of a multi-operator weekly ticket. The report also highlighted the travel information and publicity exercises being undertaken, together with recent survey figures.

Discussion ensued as the surveys and whether it was always the same people, which opted to be part of the survey that preferred not to use cars. It was explained that in the first year, 4,000 residents of Darlington took part in the survey and that each year after a cross section of the population would be targeted approximately 1,500 residents. The results would be monitored and evaluated against the previous years figures and so on. The first and final years would be full surveys, and in intermediate years the surveys would be more targeted. Clarification was sought as to the use for funding for urban and rural areas, and it was explained that the funding received

from the Department of Transport had to be used for a specific purpose, that being urban areas of the town, however, additional funding for some aspects of the work had been rolled out into rural areas.

IT WAS AGREED – That report to be welcomed and noted.

27. SHOPMOBILITY & RING A RIDE – The Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration provided the Forum with a brief update in relation to Shopmobility and Ring a Ride. In respect of Shopmobility, it was reported that the contract would no longer be going out for tender for this April and that discussions were taking place with DAD, to research benefits of providing a joined up service through integration of services. With regards to Ring A Ride, it was reported that this service, also, would not be inviting tenders and instead links were being explored with Community Services as to how to develop a comprehensive integrated service of accessible community transport. Views of the Form were welcomed to Sue Dobson, Transport Policy.

IT WAS AGREED – That further updates be brought to a future meeting of the Forum.

28. CHAIRMANS ANNOUCEMENTS – That any member of the Forum or general public could place an item on the agenda for a future meeting of the Forum by contacting the Democratic Support Officer.

That a Cycling Symposium was being on held on Wednesday 14th March 2007 in Bondgate Methodist Church and that further infromation could be obtained from the Darlington Cycling Campaign.

29. NEXT MEETING OF THE FORUM – IT WAS AGREED – That the Forum meeting scheduled for 23rd April 2007 be cancelled due to the lack of items on the agenda and that the next meeting be arranged after the May Elections.

The Chairman expressed his personal thanks to all the members of the Forum for the last four years and looked forward to continuing to work together to promote transport services in Darlington.

30. QUESTIONS – Tees Valley Metro Service – Mr Clark raised concerns as to the proposals to introduce a Tees Valley metro service and the potential impact on the Tees Valley train services.

IT WAS AGREED – That an item be placed on the agenda for a future meeting and a representative from Tees Valley Regeneration be invited to attend the meeting to discuss proposals for the Tees Valley Metro service.

A number of areas of issues were raised including concern about real time matrix signs at bus stops, an update regarding decriminalisation of parking enforcement, problems with the filter lane at Morton Palms, whether a name for the Eastern Corridor had been decided, distribution of bus timetables in every bus stop, whether there would be provision for motor cycle parking in Commercial Street car park and whether it was possible to introduce motor cycles using bus lanes.