

**LEADER'S OVERVIEW**

---

**Regional and Tees Valley Updates**

**Strategic Transport**

1. As mentioned in the Transport Portfolio report, there has been considerable progress with regards to Strategic Rail, Transport for the North and the Strategy Highway Network in the Tees Valley. Infrastructure is one of the most significant drivers, and barriers to further economic growth, and I am pleased to play a leading role in this portfolio within the Tees Valley.

**Rail North/East Coast Main Line**

2. There has been a large amount of work undertaken and progress made, in securing transformational change in rail infrastructure and services for the future of Darlington and the Tees Valley.

**Rail**

3. The last couple of years have seen a significant amount of activity in the Rail industry with a number of franchises being re-let.
4. The Department for Transport (DfT) issued consultation on rail devolution in 2012. Since then the 30 local transport authorities in the North of England, under the 'brand name' of Rail North, have been working to steer and influence the development of the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises, commencing from their renewal in February 2016.
5. I have been involved with the Chief Executive, as nominees of the Tees Valley in the development of these proposals and this formed Rail North Limited. As a Director of the Rail North Limited (RNL), I represent the interests of the Tees Valley Local Authorities.
6. The Northern and Trans Pennine Franchises are due for renewal in 2016 and the invitation to Tenders has been published to shortlisted bidders. These have included a number of achievements that Rail North has sought to achieve:
  - (a) The invitation to tenders included a significant step change for rail in terms of the requirement for new rolling stock and the need to replace the Pacer fleet.

- (b) The requirement for the Northern Franchise to include a North East Business Unit (NEBU) whereby the interests of the North East can influence the levels of service and standards across the region.
- 7. Officers from across the Tees Valley are meeting the bidders to ensure the needs and desires of the Tees Valley are understood and built into their bids.
- 8. The Electrification Task Force report was also published with the Northallerton to Middlesbrough line in the top tier of lines to be considered for funding. The Bishop Auckland/Darlington to Saltburn and Sunderland lines were included in the second tier. Ensuring these lines were established as high priorities was also a key priority for the Tees Valley, which has been secured.
- 9. The work undertaken to date in securing these achievements will ensure transformational change in rail infrastructure and services in the future for the Tees Valley and North East region.

### **Bank Top Station**

- 10. Tees Valley Unlimited has released £300k of funding for the development of feasibility work and a master planning process for rail infrastructure improvements and connectivity at the Station and in the surrounding area. This is being undertaken in partnership with Network Rail and Virgin East Coast Trains.
- 11. Bank Top station is a critical piece of infrastructure that serves the region and its importance in stimulating Economic Growth has sub-regional significance. The project is aimed to ensure the station is able to cope with projected growth that Strategic Economic Plans set out to achieve, it aims to improve connectivity across the region by acting as a more efficient interchange between interconnecting services and in the longer term is ready for HS2. It is anticipated that this work be a key influence on Network Rail's future funding programmes.

### **Transport for the North**

- 12. The Transport for the North report, The Northern Powerhouse: One Agenda, One Economy, One North was published in March 2015. This is a high level document setting out proposals for a transport strategy for the North with investment in improved road, rail, air and freight transport delivering a faster, more reliable and efficient transport system, supporting economic growth across the North of England.
- 13. I led a delegation of Members, Senior Officers and Business Leaders from Tees Valley Unlimited to meet Senior Officials of the Department for Transport to ensure the views of the Tees Valley were registered.
- 14. The generic headlines and broad thrust of the strategy is very much in accord with Darlington and the Tees Valley's ambitions for delivering a modern transport system that works well for people and for business. However, over the next few months Transport for the North will develop plans for governance, management of partnerships with Highways England (formerly called Highway's agency) and

Network Rail. The Local Enterprise Partnership, Tees Valley Unlimited have a vital role in influencing these plans, ensuring that Darlington and Tees Valley priorities are given equal consideration as plans for transport investment are developed and included within the governance arrangements.

### **Strategic Highway Infrastructure**

15. A study has been commissioned jointly with Highways England (formerly called Highway's agency) and the Tees Valley Authorities looking at Infrastructure needs for the Strategic highway network. Highways England has funded 90 per cent of the study.
16. The purpose of the study is to examine the issues and constraints associated with the A66 from Port of Tees to the A1(M) and from the A689 from the A19 to the A1(M), to identify opportunities and options for resolving them to improve links between the Tees Valley and the wider road network and increase the economic competitiveness of the Tees Valley.
17. The work is being programmed to ensure it enters Highway England's funding programmes

### **Key Cities**

18. I, together with the Chief Executive, represent the Tees Valley and the Key Cities group, an association of 26 medium sized cities. The group has commissioned important research making the case for greater devolution of Government powers and funds to accelerate economic growth and public service reform. We have been able to submit important examples to support the research which will dove-tail with our plans for a Combined Authority.

### **Darlington Partnership**

19. The Darlington Partnership's Good Friends initiative won an award in March at the Local Government Chronicle Awards. The judging panel commented that 'It demonstrates brilliant partnership working between the Council, two NHS Trusts, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Police, Age UK and Neighbourhood Watch. Judges were impressed with the way it developed users into advocates and mobilised the local community.'

### **Policing and Community Safety**

20. Following the commissioning process, which took place at the end of 2014, the contracts have been awarded in respect of a number of services. Family Help continue to provide the refuge service in the town with the contract for floating support and the Freedom Programme being awarded to Harbour.
21. Harbour is also delivering a Perpetrator programme with group sessions and these began in February. The impact of this will be assessed throughout the year with regular reports being given to the Strategic Vulnerability Group.

22. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has received its annual funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and has met to ensure that it is allocated across a range of projects that will ensure Darlington remains a safe place to live, work and visit.
23. A joint Strategic Reducing Offending and Re-offending Group has been created for Durham and Darlington and will meet regularly to ensure that the successes achieved before the Probation transformation continue in the future.

### **Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)**

24. Following a full tender process in 2014/15, NECA's (North East Council on Addictions) new, all age, all substance, Health and Wellbeing Substance Misuse Service came into being on 1 April 2015.
25. Work between March and April 2015 focussed on the transition to the new service and initial implementation. Partners and providers will continue to engage in joint working to ensure successful implementation during 2015/16. There will be a dedicated programme to develop robust pathways for all elements of the recovery journey.
26. The DAAT engaged in several pieces of work with partners around the substance misuse agenda. These included a Dead Drunk campaign in March and April, working alongside the Police, to raise awareness of the danger from road traffic collisions to drunken pedestrians and the launch of the Checkpoint programme, working with Police to target low level offenders, offering needs assessment and signposting in Police custody, where NECA will be employing one of the Checkpoint Navigators. Work also started on the Blue Light Pilot, again working with Police, to look at innovative approaches to engaging treatment resistant drinkers in the wake of recent domestic homicide reviews.

### **Alcohol Declaration**

27. At a recent meeting of the Association of North East Councils (ANEC), Leaders and elected Mayors unanimously supported a North East Local Authority declaration. The declaration was presented as a collaborative initiative and it was clear a great deal of work had taken place in each Council to enable this point of agreement to be reached. There was also interest at that ANEC meeting in widening support for the declaration to other sectors, e.g. NHS/Police/CCGs, which is an aspect that can now be progressed.

28. The Alcohol Declaration has now received further endorsement from the CSP, DAAT and YOS Boards, with the LSP citing it as one of their key priorities. It was considered at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 21<sup>st</sup> April together with a valuable presentation from Balance North East. Work begins with partners to determine the content and detail of our local Declaration.

### **Health and Well Being Board**

29. I chaired a meeting of the Health and Well Being Board on the 21 April 2015, where we received presentations from Colin Shevills from Balance advising us of the results of the North East Alcohol Perceptions Survey 2014 and Eileen Carbro, North of England Commissioning Support, on the progress to date in relation to the establishment of a Multi-disciplinary Team (MFT) approach to caring for the frail and elderly in Darlington. Other items on the agenda included, an update on the progress on the implementation of the Crisis Care Concordat; the development of a 'Road Map' to deliver new models of care in Darlington; and an exception report on the quality of clinical services provided to Darlington residents.

**Bill Dixon**  
**Leader**