

DARLINGTON TRANSPORT FORUM

18th April, 2005

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Harker, S.J. Jones and Lewis.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor F.S. Robson.

Officers in Attendance – The Assistant Director of Development and Regeneration, the Highways Manager, the Transport Policy Manager and the Town on the Move Project Manager.

Representing Outside Organisations –

Alzheimers Disease Society –

J.P Rodwell

ARRIVA North East Limited –

K. Poskett and T. Stevens

Darlington Association on Disability –

G. Pybus and C. Thwaites

Darlington and District Youth and Community Association –

N. Jay

Darlington Independent Taxi Traders Organisation –

M. Kennedy

Darlington MENCAP –

M. Richardson

Darlington Senior Citizens' Association –

A. Christian and P. Eastwood

Darlington Taxi Owners Association –

T. Brown, D. Harrod and A. Leighton

Durham Police –

M. Stubbs

Durham Tees Valley Airport –

G. Smith

Growing Older Living in Darlington –

A. Christian, B. Hoy, and P. Eastwood

Green Bus –
R. Cranmer

Low Dinsdale Parish Council –
T. O’Neil

Middleton St. George Parish Council –
C. Sirrell

Motorcycle Action Group –
S. Hill

Stagecoach North East –
D. Elphee

Independent Representatives -
R. Park and K. Fridd

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

55. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 24th January, 2005.

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

56. MATTERS ARISING – (a) Darlington’s Second Local Transport Plan (2LTP) - Pursuant to Minute 52/Jan/05 it was reported that a special meeting of the Transport Forum would be held in June to enable members to consider and make recommendation on the 2LTP before it was considered by the Environment Scrutiny Committee and forwarded on to Cabinet and Council.

(b) Motorcycle Facilities – Pursuant to Minute 50/Jan/05 it was reported that twelve motorcycle stands had been installed in five locations across the town centre.

(c) Bus Stop outside McDonalds – Pursuant to Minute 47(b)/Jan/05 Gordon Pybus advised the Forum that despite discussions out with the meeting, problems of accessing the dropped kerb at the bus stop outside McDonalds had continued. It was noted that a long-term solution to the problem would be provided through the implementation of the Pedestrian Heart Scheme and representatives from the bus operators agreed to again take the issue up outside the meeting.

57. DARLINGTON CONCESSIONARY FARE TRAVEL SCHEMES 2005/06 – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the current situation regarding the provision of concessionary travel for elderly people (over 60 years of age) and people with disabilities on local bus services and accessible taxis, following the Chancellor’s announcement in the budget of free off-peak local area bus travel for people over 60 and with disabilities.

The submitted report outlined the current situation and provision of concessionary travel in Darlington; outlined the review of the scheme which was ongoing prior to the budget announcement in March 2005; highlighted the need to change the scheme to meet the needs of local residents, meet policy outcomes and be financially sustainable to both the Council and local bus operators; and the recommended action for the 2005/06 financial year.

Particular reference was made to the eligibility criteria and use of taxi vouchers and the severe shortage of accessible vehicles due to the reluctance of the trade to invest in bespoke taxis and the lack of capacity in the Ring-a-Ride service.

Representatives from the taxi trade highlighted the expense of investing in bespoke taxis; concerns about what types of vehicle were considered to be accessible; and the need to establish the demand for accessible transport, as it was reported that the last three traders to purchase such vehicles had subsequently gone out of business due to the lack of demand. Discussion ensued on concerns regarding the consultation process with the taxi trade and it was reported that an extensive consultation programme have been undertaken by JMP Consultants on behalf of the Council.

IT WAS AGREED – That the recommended action for the financial year 2005/06 be noted and that the consultation with this Forum be incorporated into the report to be considered by Cabinet.

58. DARLINGTON: A TOWN ON THE MOVE – PROGRESS REPORT – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) updating members of the Forum on the progress towards the development of Darlington: A Town on the Move, the strategy for delivering an effective travel network for Darlington

The submitted report highlighted the findings of the travel behaviour research conducted by Socialdata, an internationally recognised authority on mobility behaviour, and the outcomes of the Town on the Move local travel summit and the National Sustainable Travel Town conference held in Darlington throughout March 2005.

Further to this, it was reported that transport consultants Steer Davies Gleave had been appointed to undertake a town wide programme of individualised travel marketing and that this three-year programme of work would start in the Harrowgate Hill area in early May 2005. Reference was also made to a comprehensive programme of events aimed at encouraging local people to walk or cycle and an eight-week marketing campaign promoting Town on the Move, which had started with radio advertising that three members of the Forum reported to have heard.

The Town on the Move Project Manager reiterated the target of the project to reduce car driver trips by Darlington residents by 10 per cent and highlighted that if people changed their the mode of transport for short trips, for just one journey per week this would make a significant difference and improvement to the development of sustainable travel in Darlington.

IT WAS AGREED – That the progress be noted.

59. LOCAL TRANSPORT PROGRAMME PLAN EXPENDITURE 2005/06 – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) updating

members of the Forum on the proposed works to be carried out in the 2005/06 financial year under the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

The submitted report detailed the allocation for 2005/06 and the way in which it would be divided amongst the various strategies outlined in the LTP, including the proposal to allocate £262,000 of revenue funding to support the prudential borrowing of £2.63 million for expenditure on capital schemes to address issues of concern raised by local residents through the Citizens' Survey.

The signing of the Council's Local Public Service Agreement with Central Government, allowing the Council to spend £600,000 on improvements to non-principal classified and unclassified roads was also noted.

A member of the Forum highlighted the need for more action with regard to the corridors of certainty, following which it was reported that progressing the corridors of certainty had proven more complex and costly than originally envisaged but would be continued and incorporated as a key objective of the second Local Transport Plan (2LTP). References were also made to the abuse of the traffic system and double yellow lines on Yarm Road, West Auckland Road and Haughton Road; the traffic congestion associated with the current Pedestrian Heart developments; and the need for further engineering and policing in some areas, which would require partnership working to relieve the current stresses.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be noted.

60. WHEELYGOOD WEBSITE – With the prior approval of the Chair to the matter being treated as urgent to inform the Forum of the Wheelygood Website at the earliest opportunity, Gordon Pybus, Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) addressed the meeting to advise the Forum of the recent launch of a new website by Rt. Hon Alan Milburn M.P. which, funded out of the current Local Transport Plan following the initiative of shopmobility customers, provided planned routes, which highlighted wheelchair and scooter accessible premises in Darlington.

It was noted that this website was the first of its kind in the country and was leading the way in the use of new technology. Members of the Forum were encouraged to access the website at www.wheelygood.org.uk

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be noted.

61. QUESTIONS – Alex Leighton, Darlington Taxi Owners' Association queried the number of white coloured buses operated by Green Bus. Richard Cranmer, Green Bus reported that 70 per cent of buses were green and the remaining white buses would be painted over the coming months subject to operational demands.