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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.

**Dinsdale Bridge**

2. The replacement of the railway bridge at Dinsdale Station in Middleton St George by Network Rail is underway. This work is part of a Network Rail project to enable larger freight containers to be transported by rail from Teesport to the rest of the UK. In order to accommodate the work the road is closed to traffic for four months (27 September 2013 to 25 January 2014).
3. A signed temporary diversion route for traffic is in place with additional signs for local traffic. A temporary footbridge has been installed to enable pedestrians to get from one side of the village to the other. The Council has made alternative arrangements for travel to school and has worked with Arriva and Network Rail to arrange a minibus service to connect with a re-timetabled Bus Service 12/12a. The bridge deck was demolished on the weekend of 25 to 29 October. Rail services have operated as normal apart from that weekend when a bus replacement service was in place.
4. The remaining work to be completed at Dinsdale station as part of the station improvements project is being programmed by Carillion (Network Rail's contractor) and Vextrix (Northern Rail's contractor) for early 2014 to fit in with the ongoing work on the replacement of Dinsdale Station Bridge. This remaining improvement work includes the removal of conifer trees alongside each platform, the resurfacing of the ramps down to each platform and the installation of handrails alongside each ramp.

**Stonebridge Junction Proposal**

5. A scheme to remodel the Stonebridge Inner Ring Road junction has been developed as part of the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement Project. The scheme involves removing the existing roundabout and replacing with a traffic signal controlled junction.
6. The proposals form part of the longer term vision for delivery of the Town Centre Fringe Regeneration including improving pedestrian connections across the ring road and the aspiration to create a pleasant riverside walk along the banks of the River Skerne as it passes through the town and help create opportunities for improved flood defences.

7. The roundabout currently acts as a barrier to the expansion of the town centre because it is difficult for pedestrians to cross on a direct line. This junction improvement will make it easier for pedestrians to cross the ring road; this will start to make the Civic Theatre area feel much more like a part of the town centre. The changes will also allow the Council to open up the riverside area, creating a new place within the town centre for people to enjoy. The more attractive a place we make our town centre, the more shops, cafes, restaurants and businesses will want to invest in being in the town centre.
8. The scheme will provide improved pedestrian, cyclists and public transport access whilst maintaining traffic flow. It is being designed to accommodate future traffic growth from developments such as the cinema and Department for Education offices. This is the first step in a series in infrastructure improvements around the town centre designed to enable and facilitate the ambitious regeneration proposals in the town centre, town centre fringe and Central Park.
9. The consultation period ended on 18 October 2013 to which we received no objections to the proposal. A public event was held in the Dolphin Centre on 25 September 2013 and the scheme proposals could be viewed on the Council's website. The outcome of the consultation and traffic orders was presented to Cabinet on 5 November 2013. It is anticipated that work will commence on site in early 2014.

### **Darlington School of Maths and Science**

10. A new footpath to provide access to the rear of the school has recently been completed. This provides improved access to the school from areas to the south such as Mowden. Further improvements are proposed along the link including the provision of lighting.

### **West Park Academy**

11. A new footway link has been provided to West Park Academy to create a more direct pedestrian and cycle link to the school from the new West Park estate and Cockerton.

### **Highway Maintenance Schemes**

12. Recently completed schemes:

- (a) Nunnery Lane – footway refurbishment;
- (b) 2013 Annual Surfacing Dressing Programme;
- (c) B6279 Staindrop Road – carriageway resurfacing;
- (d) A167 North Road – carriageway resurfacing;
- (e) A68 Woodlands Road – carriageway deep patching and resurfacing; and
- (f) A1150 Whinfield Road – carriageway resurfacing.

13. Ongoing schemes:

- (a) A1150 Salters Lane North – carriageway patching;

- (b) C55 John Street – carriageway resurfacing;
- (c) B6280 Carmel Road North – carriageway patching;
- (d) Hewitson Road South – carriageway reconstruction and surfacing; and
- (e) A68 Burtree – carriageway resurfacing.

14. Schemes due to commence:

- (a) A67 Carmel Road South – carriageway retexturing; and
- (b) Brankin Road – footway refurbishment

### **Bus Changes in the Town Centre**

15. Due to issues with congestion on Prebend Row, the Council agreed new stop allocations with bus operators with effect from 27 October. As such, more frequent services now serve the stops on Prebend Row, with Arriva services 9/10 leaving from Stop F and service 13a/b leaving from Stop G. Less frequent services have moved onto Tubwell Row where there is more kerb space for passengers to wait. Local Motion Travel Advisors were on hand in the town centre for two weeks after the change to assist people in locating their new stop. Local Motion also refreshed the information at town centre bus stops, to include a new stand allocation poster with an A-Z index by destination, which includes a town centre map.

### **Changes to Arriva Services**

16. From 27 October Arriva also introduced some changes to their bus network, following feedback from customers and discussion with Councillors at Place Scrutiny Committee. This included:
- (a) A change to service 14/14a (Town Centre - Skerne Park/Hundens Lane/Harrowgate Farm) and the introduction of a service 14b which replaced service 6 (Town Centre - Whinfield). The new service 14b serves the Town Centre, Yarm Road, Hundens Lane, Albert Hill, North Road, Fitzwilliam Drive, Thompson Street East, Springfield and Whinfield every 30 minutes. This is an increase in frequency from the hourly service provided by the current service 6. Some peak time journeys on the service 14b will only operate as far as Fitzwilliam Drive. Unfortunately, this does mean that Henry/Gurney/Katherine Street will no longer be directly served by the service 14, however residents in this area have a bus stop within a maximum of 250 metres away on North Road or Albert Road and can catch any frequent service travelling directly to the town centre. Services 14/14A to Skerne Park (every 10 minutes) and Harrowgate Farm (every 30 minutes) remain at the same frequency. A new bus map is available and up to date information is at every bus stop.
  - (b) Arriva will be re-introducing an additional bus into service 9/10. This will allow for additional time to be added into journeys on both services 9 and 10, which will alleviate punctuality issues.

## **Launch of Sapphire**

17. Arriva launched its new Sapphire service on Service 7 (Darlington – Durham via Newton Aycliffe, Woodham, Ferryhill and Chilton) in November, with a launch event on 18 November at Walworth Castle. The ten new Sapphire single deck buses will have a unique look, and with it being a premium service, the buses also have E-leather seats, free Wi-Fi, charging points, audio visual announcements (part of the Local Motion project and funded by DfT's Local Sustainable Transport Fund), and dedicated drivers with enhanced customer care training (partly funded by Local Motion).

## **Multi-Storey Car Park**

18. The Capital Projects Team are progressing the initial feasibility and design of the proposed multi-storey car park, to be located on the site of Beaumont Street (North) car park, (opposite Beaumont House). The car park will provide around 650 spaces, with the option (subject to agreement) of providing a unit from which Shopmobility would operate, relocating from their current unit on Horsemarket. Further detail is provided in a separate report, on the agenda of this Council meeting.

## **Schools Programme**

19. The 2013/14 MEGA Motion campaign was launched on 1 October in Darlington with a screening of the new MEGA Motion music video and a play incorporating the new theme of 'Travelling through Time'. 15 Darlington schools with primary aged pupils have signed up to take part in this year's campaign and the first MEGA Walk of the year took place at Rydal Academy on 25 October with a theme of 'Walking with Dinosaurs'. The November walk was at Heighington CE Primary where they travelled to school with the 'Energetic Egyptians'.
20. On 9 October an action day was held to reward schools that had received an accreditation through the Modeshift STARS scheme. Teachers attending the event, from eleven schools, were also able to share best practice and encourage each other. Four pupils from Carmel College also attended the event and answered questions from the teachers and also joined in with the activities. Awards were given out to eight schools for reaching Bronze Level and five schools for reaching or maintaining Silver Level
21. Additional cycle parking has been installed at St Aidan's due to the increasing numbers of students cycling to school. This has been funded through Local Motion.

## **Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement Project (TVBNI)**

22. A new contract has been established for the supply of bus shelters following a joint tendering process with Redcar and Cleveland Council. Shelters can now be ordered for the TVBNI routes on a rolling programme.

23. A new bus stop flag design has been agreed across the Tees Valley and TVBNI funding is being used to replace all bus stop flags. The flags will ensure that bus stops are highly visible to passengers and passing drivers.
24. The 2013 Christmas Campaign 'Connecting you this Christmas', will feature outdoor advertising encouraging people to use the bus for festive journeys - such as shopping, attending parties and pantomimes etc. For the first time we will be using 48 sheet (billboard) advertising on key commuter routes in the Tees Valley, as this should have a high impact on car commuters. Alongside billboards we will also be advertising on bus rears, bus shelters and also piloting advertising in rail stations to target rail users who may be more susceptible to the 'use the bus' message. Artwork for the campaign is currently being designed and should be available shortly. The campaign will also feature a 30 second viral video that will feature Santa experiencing difficulties getting around on his sleigh (pesky and uncooperative reindeer, lack of parking spaces etc.) and ending up using the bus to get around over the Christmas period.
25. The Young People's campaign which ran over the summer targeting young people at local colleges across the Tees Valley has been nominated in the Social Media Campaign of the year category of the Public Sector Communications Awards (to be announced 19 November).
26. The Stockton pilot activity for direct Marketing/Telemarketing activity has been judged to have been a success by all partners in the project, so the project is being rolled out to more TVBNI routes. It is anticipated that activity in Darlington will commence in the New Year, initially focusing on the North Road corridor and the new Sapphire service, complementing other marketing activities being carried out by Arriva. The Direct Marketing project involves issuing free day tickets to people living along TVBNI routes and following up with a phone call offering a free weekly ticket. The project aims to target non-bus users of fare paying age. Initial results from the pilot suggest that for every £1 spent on the project, a further £6 will be generated through the fares paid on additional journeys undertaken by people who have been convinced to try the bus. As the project is rolled out further analysis will be carried out to ensure the project continues to deliver good value for money and encourages more people to use the bus.

### **Local Sustainable Transport Fund**

27. A new route is now complete linking Teesside University Darlington Campus and Darlington College to Bank Top Station. With ample lighting, the new route makes it easier and safer for pedestrians and cyclists to access both the College and University campuses from the Yarm Road direction via Peel Street, opposite St John's Church. The new cycle route has been funded by the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund through the Local Motion project. The path was officially opened on 25 October by Jenny Chapman, MP for Darlington.
28. Further improvements have been completed at North Road rail station. Network Rail has installed a Harrington Hump, a pre-formed platform which increases the height of the platform to enable easier access to trains by reducing the gap

between platform and the train doorway. A new help point has also been installed by Northern Rail.

29. Local Motion is joining forces with Connect Tees Valley (ref paragraph 24) to develop a Christmas campaign targeted at Darlington residents. The 'Connecting you this Christmas' creative is designed to encourage bus use over the Christmas period and will be communicated through outdoor media across the Tees Valley area. As part of the campaign, we will also produce a Local Motion branded Christmas card to promote the benefits of all modes of sustainable transport. The card will be sent to households across Darlington, Shildon and Newton Aycliffe and will feature a moving element to encourage people to interact with it. The card will also direct people to the 'Local Motion New Year challenge' website.
30. To maintain the momentum of the campaign we are using the Christmas card to raise awareness of the Local Motion New Year Challenge – weekly challenges that will take place throughout January. The challenges will encourage people to try out new travel modes at a time when they are more open to breaking old habits and making new resolutions. The microsite, which will have an interactive element to encourage engagement and a data capture facility so we can keep people up to date on future challenge competitions, will be held on a third party server, but will link directly with the Local Motion site. Visits to the microsite will be driven from radio commercials and social media, as well as the Christmas card.
31. We are working with Star Radio to improve Local Motion brand awareness and increase engagement on the Local Motion Facebook page. For six months Star Radio will post messages on our behalf – using content pre-approved by us – utilising their resource and expertise in social media advertising. The campaign is being run in conjunction with radio advertising to drive more people to the Facebook page and the Local Motion Website. The campaign has been running since July and the numbers of 'likes' to our page has grown from 57 to 952. The number of people viewing, sharing and engaging with the content and Local Motion messages has increased significantly since the campaign began. The content being shared by Local Motion focuses on being active outdoors and as part of this we provided updates on events in the area, walking and cycling routes, and facts about how walking and cycling can help you stay fit. We have recently run a pedometer giveaway to promote walking and clocking up 10,000 steps per day. We are currently awaiting addresses so that we can distribute them. We have concentrated on walking and cycling in the first three months and will now start to work in messages about public transport.
32. The 2013 ITM project has now been completed after targeting approximately 10,500 houses across Lingfield, Central Sadberge and Whessoe, North Road and Harrowgate Hill wards. The final results are currently being analysed and should be available by January. The 2014 programme will begin in March and will focus on Hummersknott, Park West, Park East, College, Bank Top, Lascelles and Eastbourne.
33. The Local Motion Travel Advisors will continue to work over the winter providing travel information and advice at market stalls, supermarkets, job centres and other community events across Darlington and South Durham.

## **Town Centre Christmas Parking Promotion**

34. Distinct Darlington have allocated £15.5k for marketing during the run up to Christmas and have also committed funding to run a number of Town Centre events, activities include:
- (a) Launch of the ice rink on 7 December with TFM broadcasting live on this day;
  - (b) A 'Buy Local' feature in Darlington Together in the run up to Christmas;
  - (c) TV advertising using an existing Darlington Town Centre advert for two weeks from 24 October;
  - (d) Filming a second advert to promote the Christmas offering in the town centre i.e. ice rink, parking promotions, late night shopping, etc. this has been confirmed to run on from ITV 1 to 6 December. This TV advert can include a feature on a Darlington Town Centre parking promotion; and
  - (e) Christingle Market running from 5 to 8 December
35. To assist Town Centre businesses in gaining further value from the promotional activities described above, Cabinet has agreed that the Council offer free parking in Council operated car parks and on street parking bays after 3.00pm for the period 7 to 24 December.
36. Based on parking revenue in previous years it has been estimated that this would result in a loss (net of VAT) of an estimated £37,500 in revenue from parking. The Distinct Darlington Board has agreed to cover 50 per cent of the estimated reduction in revenue.
37. It is anticipated that the promotion will help to spread some of the demand for parking further throughout the day, thereby reducing pressure on parking spaces at the peak time, which is usually between 12.00pm and 2.00pm. Depending upon the impact of the promotion in 2013, encouragement to spread demand maybe a useful strategy to adopt as one element of the parking contingency plan required to mitigate against the temporary loss of Town Centre parking spaces when the Feethams developments are taking place.

**Councillor David Lyonette**  
**Transport Portfolio**