
OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

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.

Inner Ring Road/Stonebridge Junction Project

2. The scheme is substantially complete with the traffic signals having been switched on week commencing 1 December 2014. The junction is working well and we have received some positive feedback.
3. There are some additional works to carry out including provision of additional guardrail to comply with safety audit requirements, removal of some old guardrail and some footway and verge improvements towards Feethams roundabout.

A67 Carlbury Banks Landslip

4. Phase 2 commenced on 2 June 2014. Northumbrian Water Limited's contractor has laid approx. one kilometre of new pipeline. It is currently working within the road to connect and commission the new pipeline. Whilst this element of the project is behind schedule it will not have an impact on the overall programme.
5. Phase 3 has commenced with Graham Construction as the contractor for the Design and Build of the stabilisation works. As part of enabling works, foliage and trees on the embankment have been cleared. The main 'soil nailing' slope stabilisation works commenced in November 2014. The works are anticipated to be complete in April/May 2015.
6. We continue to provide updates through the press, on the website and through social media, along with letters to local residents, business and Councillors. Local Councillors have been proactive in communicating any changes and updates to directly affected residents.

Feethams Bus Stops

7. A planning application for proposed works to provide improved bus stop waiting facilities at Feethams, adjacent to the Town Hall, was submitted in November 2014, with works programmed to commence in January 2015. The works include the removal of the existing retaining wall for the Town Hall forecourt and construction of steps up to the forecourt. This is required to accommodate the additional bus stops whilst maintaining the footway link to the proposed cinema and leisure development. The works will require the closure of the footway outside of the Town

Hall though access will be maintained from Feethams.

8. This project is part of a wider programme of works to improve the Feethams area, which includes the construction of the Department for Education building, cinema development, multi storey car park and associated public realm and traffic management improvements.

Resident Parking Zones (RPZ)

9. A RPZ is being developed for the Bank Top area from the Local Transport Plan funding at the request of a number of residents. This area suffers from both commuter and rail related non-residential parking. Consultation will take place towards the end of the year and the scheme could potentially be implemented as early as March 2015 depending on the consultation response and subject to no objections to the legal order.
10. We are proposing to carry out a trial of visitor parking permits over a one year period in three of our RPZs. The RPZs we have chosen are zone E Hollyhurst Road area, zone G Hargreave Terrace area and zone K Borough Road area. We have chosen these zones because there is spare capacity in the resident parking bays in most streets, the introduction of the visitor permits should not therefore require any physical changes on the streets and will therefore be relatively inexpensive to trial. We do not have a set date for the implementation of the permits at this time but it is likely to be in spring 2015.

Central Park South Junction

11. Details of a proposed signalised junction on Yarm Road, close to Neasham Road roundabout, have been submitted to the Planning department for approval. The junction which is located on Green Street will serve the proposed 26,000m² of commercial development at the southern end of Central Park. There are already two developments taking shape in this area: Business Central (Business Growth Hub) and The Centre for Process Innovation's National Biologic Centre (CPI). Further proposals are in the pipeline including the National Horizons Centre and Factories for the Future, another CPI development.
12. The scheme involves a signalled controlled junction including signalised pedestrian phases. The level of traffic emerging from Central Park once this is complete coupled with the proximity of Neasham Road roundabout and the current level of traffic on Yarm Road creates significant design challenges and we are working with traffic modelling consultants to ensure that we arrive at the best scheme possible.
13. There is a second phase of the scheme to provide a link road through the southern section of Central Park, to provide access to the commercial area. This will be subject to a planning application in March/April 2015.
14. Funding for both phases of the scheme has been provisionally allocated as part of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) which is administered by Tees Valley Unlimited.

Sugar Hill Park Footway/Cycleway

15. A planning application will be submitted for a path through Sugar Hill Park linking Prior Street to the area around the former Alderman Leach Primary School. This route will act as a Safe Route to School. There is a section 106 payment of £25k from the developer of the Alderman Leach site and £54k of Local Transport Plan funding. This will be unlikely to deliver the whole scheme and it will therefore come forward in phases.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

16. Recently completed schemes:

- (a) A67, Coniscliffe Road, Carmel Road to Salutation Road – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (b) A67, Coniscliffe Road, Merrybent to High Coniscliffe – Carriageway Resurfacing

17. Ongoing schemes:

- (a) A67, Coniscliffe Road, Carmel Road to Salutation Road – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (b) A67, Coniscliffe Road, Merrybent to High Coniscliffe – Carriageway Resurfacing

18. Schemes due to commence:

- (a) Cleveland Terrace/Cleveland Avenue Roundabout - Carriageway Resurfacing
- (b) Coleridge Gardens – Carriageway Patching and Resurfacing
- (c) Tyne Crescent – Carriageway Patching
- (d) Coombe Drive – Carriageway Refurbishment
- (e) A1150, Whinfield Road, Springfield to Whinbush Way - Footway Refurbishment

Workplace Travel Plans

19. Members of the Local Motion team attended a drop in session at the Department for Transport offices to provide information and guidance to approximately 50 DfE staff about their travel options when they relocate to their new building in the town centre in February. Many of those attending who currently travel by car were keen to explore whether bus or train (and in some cases cycling) could provide a convenient and cost effective alternative to driving and parking in the town centre. Many were surprised about the frequency of bus services and the good value of weekly, monthly or season tickets.

Public Transport

20. Arriva launched its MAXed services on 5 December 2015 with an event in Darlington town centre featuring Titan the Robot. Services X66 Darlington – Stockton – Middlesbrough and Services X26/X27 Darlington – Richmond – Catterick have been branded as MAX services. The refurbished vehicles have smart new livery, free WiFi, CCTV, Next Stop Announcements (funded from LSTF) e-leather seating, money back guarantee and additional customer care training for drivers.
21. Following the successful ‘Bring Back Christmas By Bus’ campaign, a new Tees Valley-wide campaign launched on 5 January. This campaign ‘We’ll get you to the heart of town hassle free’ is an advertising campaign promoting travel by bus to support local town centres. Adverts will appear on the majority of buses operating across the Tees Valley.
22. The new Customer Management System for the issuing and management of concessionary travel bus passes went ‘live’ in January. The new system is being rolled out across all of the north east local authorities. The Darlington system was tested during December and included training for the officers in both the system and new business processes. New application forms for the concessionary travel scheme were also issued in December, which incorporated all the recent legislation changes in relation to automatic PIP eligibility, war veterans and changes to pensionable age.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

23. A sustainable travel music roadshow was taken to four secondary schools in the Borough. Using the hook of music, young people learnt about the benefits of sustainable travel. The feedback from the young people was very positive. However, the more important phase of the programme is to work with the schools to set up a team of Travel Ambassadors in each school to work on ideas to promote and encourage students to travel sustainably. The ideas will be presented to a panel and the best ones will be implemented with some support from Local Motion.
24. Darlington Council will be delivering the Individualised Travel Marketing programmes in both the Tees Valley and County Durham as part of the 2015/16 LSTF projects. Recruitment of travel advisors to work on the project began in January and they will start in April 2015.
25. Following the successful ‘Travel Safely’ campaign in November and December, a marketing campaign targeting commuters began in January. ‘Try something new’ promotes sustainable travel options, particularly to those who travel to work by car. The tfm radio campaign includes three adverts promoting the benefits of public transport, active travel (walking and cycling) and car sharing. An on-line video of sustainable travel options in Darlington forms the basis of a competition to win a prize.

26. Ongoing work on community transport with Tees Valley Rural Community Council has resulted in a pilot project in Brafferton. The Brafferton Shopper bus has operated between 11 November and 23 December, one day a week, providing a service to local residents. TVRCC funded the first 4 trips and the Parish Meeting contributed to the other trips. The results of this pilot will be considered as part of a wider review of community transport being undertaken by the Community Transport Association on behalf of TVRCC and funded by the Big Lottery.

East Coast Mainline

27. On 27 November the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that the Stagecoach - Virgin Company has been awarded the East Coast Rail Franchise.
28. The new franchise will start in March 2015 and is planned to run until 31 March 2023, with the option for a one-year extension at the DfT's discretion.
29. Full details of the franchise contract are yet to emerge, headlines are:
- (a) £140m planned investment to deliver an improved service and more personalised travel
 - (b) Over £25m planned spend in improving stations and car parking
 - (c) New trains and faster more frequent services
 - (d) Investment in staff with more training and new dedicated innovation council
 - (e) New technology to improve customer experience on-board and at stations
30. Council Officers have contacted Stagecoach – Virgin to seek an early meeting to discuss potential improvements at Darlington Station and to East Coast services from Darlington

Parking Contingency

31. Prior to the Christmas period a number of incentives were put in place to mitigate the loss of parking in and around Feethams. This included reduced tariffs in a number of lightly used car parks and a third hour free offer in all short stay car parks. There was also a Saturday park and ride facility provided at Darlington College to ensure that there was sufficient car parking spaces in and around the Town Centre to meet the Christmas peak.
32. Part of the old town hall car park will be reopened in January 2015. This is part of the car park that was not built on as part of the Department for Education (DfE) works and will provide 100 short stay public parking spaces (including three disabled bays). These have been re-provided on a temporary basis whilst the multi storey car park is being built and will make up for part of the short fall created by those works.

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Transport Portfolio