

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 junction is now fully operational and is showing significant benefits to all traffic. Arriva has indicated that it is managing their movement of its buses and there is less delay for them, meaning they have more chance of keeping to the timetable. We have received some comments regarding time taken to cross on pedestrian crossings. We will review this in March after the junction has been operational for three months to see if any additional time can be provided to the pedestrian phases.
3. There are some additional works ongoing 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 and Freeman's Place roundabout.

A67 Carlbury Banks Landslip

4. Phase 3 commenced in October 2014 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.
5. Once the scheme is complete sections of the diversion route will be resurfaced. These will include Staindrop Road to make good some of the deterioration of the surfacing caused by the additional traffic.
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. The works commenced in January 2015 with the first phase including the widening of the footway adjacent to the National Express stand. The second phase commenced at the start of February and involved the removal of the concrete retaining wall and a section of concrete slab that formed part of the Town Hall forecourt.
8. Work in March will be focused around construction of the bus layby and associated service diversions and footway works. The steps will be constructed towards the end of April 2015 with the final work being the relaying of the concrete slab that forms part of the forecourt.
9. 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

10. Consultation has concluded on the introduction of a Residents Parking Zone (RPZ) in the Bank Top area to address parking issues associated with the train station. If there is a majority in favour of the proposals they will formally advertised in the press and are likely to be introduced by the end of May 2015.
11. We are also proposing to introduce visitor parking permits on a trial basis. 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.
12. We are also consulting on minor changes within existing RPZs. These are as a result of requests from members of the public and they are again likely to be introduced by May 2015.

Central Park South Junction

13. Detailed design of the proposed signal controlled junction on Yarm Road, close to Neasham Road roundabout is ongoing. 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.
14. 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 arrive at the best solution.

15. 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.
16. 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 (TVU). Final decision on the timescale for the delivery of the junction will be made by TVU in March 2015.

Sugar Hill Park Footway/Cycleway

17. A planning application has been 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

18. Recently completed schemes:

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

19. Ongoing schemes:

- (a) Belgrave Terrace, Hurworth – Footway Refurbishment
- (b) Farrer Street and Anns Terrace Back Lane - Back Lane Refurbishment

20. 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

School Travel Plans

21. The sustainable transport schools team are piloting a new approach to working with secondary schools throughout the spring and summer terms of 2015. Groups of young people from DSMS, Longfield and Carmel are looking at the transport issues that are important to them and developing projects to try to address some of those

issues.

22. In November 2014 the Go Your Own Way roadshow toured the schools to highlight sustainable travel messages and acted as the starting point of the project to spark initial interest. On 18 March the groups presented their ideas at a panel event and received feedback to help them in taking their ideas forward.
23. As well as looking at real-life transport issues, the sustainable travel ambassador's approach gives the pupil's opportunities to develop their team work, confidence and project management skills. The project can contribute towards the schools gaining a Modeshift STARs award

Public Transport

24. The new Customer Management System for the issuing and management of ENCTS cards (concessionary travel) went 'live' in February. The new system is being rolled out across all of the north east local authorities funded by the North East Smart Ticketing Initiative (NESTI). The Darlington system was configured to meet local requirements and Customer Service Centre Advisors were trained in both the system and new business processes as part of its introduction.
25. A next stop audio announcement system was fitted to buses on the newly introduced Arriva MAX services in February. Passengers using the MAX services X66 Darlington – Stockton – Middlesbrough and service X26/X27 Darlington – Richmond – Catterick benefit from the new system which announces the next stop the bus will arrive at. This is particularly of benefit to people with visual impairments and those who may not be familiar with the local area. This was funded from LSTF (Local Motion).
26. The extension to the contracts for the operation of grant funding for community bus services 16/16A and 20 comes to an end in June 2015 and as such the services are being reviewed. Surveys have taken place with passengers using the services and this is being considered together with patronage data and concessionary fares information. A decision will be made on whether to continue supporting these services, in some form, utilising a small amount of grant funding received from Government from the devolved Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG). The local review of services fed into a wider review of community transport in the Tees Valley that the Community Transport Association undertook on behalf of the Tees Valley Rural Community Council, funded by the Big Lottery. This wider review was concerned with assessing the transport need of communities without a conventional bus service.
27. Town Centre Bus Stops - The Arriva services operating from stand I on Tubwell Row were moved to stand J and vice versa with effect from 1 February 2015. The shelters at these stands were also moved back slightly within the available kerb space. This change ensured that the Arriva gas buses could be better accommodated within the space available. Timetables were updated at these stops, and a revised A-Z destination poster, including town centre map was installed at every town centre bus stop.

Third Local Transport Plan (LTP)

28. On 3 March Cabinet considered a report on the delivery of the LTP and agreed to release funding for delivery of transport schemes in 2015/16.
29. Darlington's Local Transport Plan, sets out the transport strategy for supporting sustainable growth over the period up to 2026, with five core objectives taking account of the social, environmental and economic impacts of transport, plus a best value objective to implement schemes that demonstrate value for money.
30. The Council takes an evidenced based approach to scheme delivery, aiming to maximise the efficiency of the existing transport system before considering major investment in new transport infrastructure. Put simply this means that the largest proportion of the limited funding has been allocated to maintenance of the transport network, with better management of the network the next priority, before investment in network improvements.
31. Measures aimed at achieving the core LTP objectives fall into the three broad categories:
 - (a) Management of the transport network, through: -
 - (i) Reducing the need for people to travel longer distances to access employment, goods and services. Achieved through planning policies designed to ensure co-location of housing and key local services and through improving local accessibility, particularly by foot, by cycle and public transport.
 - (ii) Providing accurate travel information, covering all travel modes so that people can make better informed travel choices.
 - (iii) Implementation of a highway network plan, so that disruption from planned works such as utility and other schemes on the highway is minimised; and so that robust plans are in place to manage traffic in the event of unplanned incidents (accidents, flooding etc).
 - (b) Maintaining the transport network, through investment in maintenance of the highway network (roads, footways, cycle paths, drainage, street lighting and public rights of way).
 - (c) Improving the transport network, through Council managed investment, for example the Town Centre ring road junction scheme, and through influencing others to invest in improving transport. Examples of the latter include the recent £8M investment by Arriva in new buses and investment from Network Rail and PD Ports at Dinsdale Station.

Local Transport Funding

32. Since 2010 reductions in formula based funding have impacted on the level of resources to deliver Highway Maintenance and Integrated Transport Block schemes. However over the period since 2010/11 the Council has been successful

in bidding for 'challenge' funds, notably:

- (a) Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement Grant, from which the Council has invested £9.893m in highway and bus network improvements.
- (b) Department for Transport 'Pinch Point' fund contributing £2.445M towards the cost of repairing the A67 at Carlbury.
- (c) Local Sustainable Transport Fund, securing £4.08M for sustainable transport measures.
- (d) In March 2014 the Council's sustainable transport team led a Tees Valley bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) for funding in 2015/16, securing a total of £1.267M to be shared between the five Tees valley Local Authorities.

33. From April 2015 the mechanism for allocation of transport funding to local authorities has changed, funding for transport schemes is split into:

- (a) Predominantly capital funding from the Local Growth Fund (LGF), for which funding priorities are agreed by Local Enterprise Partnerships. To be eligible for funding schemes need to demonstrate their strategic importance to the Tees Valley.
- (b) Integrated Transport Block (ITB) allocation made direct to local authorities. From April 2015 the Department for Transport has introduced a new formula for allocation of ITB funds. Overall the national ITB budget has reduced by £200M, with that sum redirected into the LGF. Government have allocated Darlington £886,000 per year for the ITB over the next three years.
- (c) Highway Maintenance Block Funding made direct to local authorities. The Department for Transport have introduced a new formula for allocation of Highway Maintenance funds, including an element of challenge funding, where up to £200M of the national £770M budget will be awarded on a competitive basis. Government have allocated Darlington's Highway Maintenance Block £1.738M in 2015/16, £1.593M in 2016/17 and £1.545M in 2017/18. The Council were required to submit a bid into the challenge fund for the next three years by 9 February 2015. A bid for over £5 million was submitted.

34. It is likely that the Department for Transport will continue its policy of releasing substantial elements of funding through a competitive bidding process and so that Darlington has the opportunity to access this funding it will be important to ensure that scheme business cases' are prepared in advance.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

35. The Local Motion Team was successful at the inaugural Smarter Travel Awards 2015, winning the Best LSTF Team award for their work on 'invigorating bus services in Darlington'. Shortlisted from 22 entries the judging panel selected Darlington's submission as it provided clear links between the issues that had been

identified; actions to address the issues and the impact of those actions, in particular increasing patronage and improving customer satisfaction.

36. In 2015, the Council will project manage the rollout of Personalised Travel Planning (PTP) across Durham and the Tees Valley. PTP is a key tool in the promotion of sustainable travel options. The process engages residents in a conversation about their travel habits and provides them with information and incentives in order to enable them to make more informed travel choices. From April through to the end of October, two teams of Travel Advisors will attempt to make contact with up to 35,000 households in Darlington, Durham (Ferryhill, Spennymoor, Willington and Crook) Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland. The recruitment process took place in February 2015 and the team will begin work in April.
37. The Local Motion commuter campaign which began in January and runs until 31 March 2015, has been a success in terms of using digital advertising to direct people to the TFM video competition (hosted on the TFM website) and promoting the Aycliffe-Darlington weekly bus ticket. The campaign has also used petrol pump advertising. Once the campaign has ended an evaluation report will be produced to inform future campaign development, particularly around the relative success of offering the chance to win a prize vs information about a good deal (unlimited travel for a week between Darlington and Newton Aycliffe on Arriva services for just £16).

Strategic Road Initiatives

38. A Joint Highways Agency and Tees Valley LEP feasibility study has been commissioned (to complete by March 2016) looking at options for improving strategic East – West connectivity between the A19 and A1(M). The study will consider:
 - (a) A66(M) and A1(M) Junction 57A66 Darlington bypass
 - (b) Darlington Northern Relief Road
 - (c) A66 South-west Stockton-on-Tees to A19
 - (d) A66 from A19 to Teesport
 - (e) A689 in Tees Valley and County Durham

Strategic Rail

39. Virgin East Coast, a joint venture between Stagecoach and Virgin took over operation of the East Coast Mainline on 1st March. This is an eight year franchise with the option of a one year extension.
40. Officers have met with representatives of the Virgin East Coast management team and discussed our aspirations for major improvements at Darlington Bank Top Station, enhanced customer service and better integration with local rail and bus services.
41. Virgin East Coast has made commitments to short to medium term improvements within the East Coast franchise agreement including:

- (a) Improvements to customer waiting facilities and on platform areas
 - (b) Free WiFi in stations
 - (c) Customer information improvements
 - (d) New signage/wayfinding
 - (e) Additional parking
 - (f) Improved cycle facilities
42. To progress longer term plans for a major upgrade at Bank Top the Council is commissioning a Master plan and outline business case for remodelling of the Station in partnership with TVU; with Network Rail and Virgin East Coast key partners in supporting this work and influencing future rail investment plans. Funding for the Master plan has come from Central Government through the TVU Local Growth Fund.
43. Government has announced the invitation to tender for the Northern and Transpennine Express franchises, with bids from the shortlisted train operators to be submitted by summer 2015, and award of the contract scheduled for December 2015.
44. The Leader of the Council, Local MP's, Senior Officers and Business representatives are lobbying Government on the importance of local rail connectivity to the Tees Valley and wider regional Economy. Key asks are modernisation of passenger rolling stock, better integration of services and improved ticketing and customer service.

Tees Valley Rail Local Improvements

45. The infrastructure for the customer information screens has now been installed at North Road Railway Station. The system is now being finally tested before going 'live'. The screens will show 'real time' information about trains arriving at and departing from the station.

Multi Storey Car Park

46. Work has commenced on construction of the new multi-storey car park accessed from Beaumont Street. This will accommodate 650 parking spaces plus a unit for shopmobility.

**Councillor David Lyonette
Transport Portfolio**