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**OVERVIEW OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Highways and Transport Portfolio :-
  - (a) **Highway Maintenance Plan** – Cabinet at its meeting held on 7th June, 2005, approved the adoption of an Interim Highway Maintenance Plan. It was reported that the final plan would be produced, once the Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance was published by the Government. The Code would form the foundation on which the plan would be built.
  - (b) **Darlington Concessionary Fare Travel Schemes 2005/06** – Members agreed that, following the announcement by the Government that a new national scheme for people over the age of 60 and for people with disabilities be introduced in April 2006 to allow them to access free off peak local area bus travel, no changes be made to the existing concessionary fare travel scheme for bus travel until after 31st March, 2006. As the taxi voucher scheme was unaffected by the announcement, it was agreed that the existing taxi voucher scheme be amended from 1st October, 2005, in order to address the issues raised by users.
  - (c) **Taxi Voucher Scheme** – Changes have been agreed and new vouchers will be issued in September. The scheme has been extended to cover journeys made in any Darlington Borough Council licensed hackney carriage, private hire vehicle and Ring a Ride vehicle and for any trip that starts or ends within the Borough. The eligibility criteria have been changed as follows:
    - (i) People who meet the national criteria for travel disability
    - (ii) People aged 75 or over
    - (iii) People who are residents in a Registered Residential or Nursing Home in the Borough

Residents who currently receive taxi vouchers will be contacted in September by letter with details of the changes to the scheme and outlining their options. Darlington Association on Disability will be briefed in July on the schemes so that they can provide an extra source of information and support for residents. A summary of the changes will appear in the August edition of Town Crier
  - (d) **Darlington Transport Forum** – I chaired a meeting of the Darlington Transport Forum held on 18th April, 2005 at which a number of items were discussed including, the Darlington Concessionary Fare Travel Schemes 2005/06; a progress report on the

Darlington 'A Town on the Move' initiative; Local Transport Programme Plan Expenditure 2005/06; and the 'Wheelygood' Website.

Meetings of the Forum were also held on 6th June and 4 July 2005, latterly when I chaired a meeting discussing the Council's Second Local Transport Plan.

- (e) **Supported Bus Services** – The Council acted quickly when Green Bus went into liquidation to ensure that all replacement services were in place in a short time. These emergency contracts were for a four week period. New interim contracts have now been issued which operate from Sunday 3 July until the end of the year. In the majority of cases it is the operator that is changing, rather than any changes to the timetable or route. The services affected are 16A, 30A, 31A, 17A, 17C, 97, 26, 18, 20, 21, 24, 23 and 74. The most significant change is the withdrawal of Services 17A and 17C. Alternatives have been put in place to ensure that residents still have access to a bus service. Revised timetables were placed at bus stops on the day of the change.
- (f) **Travel Plan for Central Park** – Transport Policy Officers have worked with White Young Green on developing this Travel Plan. It will be submitted with the planning application for Central Park in July. The plan covers initiatives for both the commercial and residential elements of the development.
- (g) **Bike It Initiative – National Bike Week** – Hospitals at West Park and the Memorial sites took part in Bike Week, promoting the health benefits of cycling to work. The Council also held a series of events for staff during the week including guided rides, bikers breakfast and Dr Bike.
- (h) **Council Travel Plan** – In order to revise the Council's own Travel Plan an electronic questionnaire has been developed to collect information on current travel patterns. This has now been tested and Waterstones, the web design company, are making some minor amendments. This will then be sent to all Members of staff that have access to Email. A paper version will be available to staff that do not have access to Email. The questionnaire will be promoted via the Flyer.
- (i) **Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2004/05** – the report has been completed and submitted to Government Office North East (GONE) and Department for Transport a month early. This enables GONE to ask any questions which may arise and seek clarification during July, before the official final submission date of 29 July 2005.
- (j) **Framework Accessibility Strategy** – The Strategy has been completed and will be submitted with the Second Local Transport Plan. Further work and consultation will be undertaken in the Autumn before submission of the final version in March 2006. The document has the full support of Darlington Partnership.
- (k) **Airport Transport Forum** – SkyExpress 737, the new bus service operating between the Airport, Bank Top rail station and the town centre coach stop, was discussed. Initial feedback from users had been very positive. Patronage had increased four-fold

in the first month with very little promotion. The Airport plans to promote the service to coincide with the launch of new air services this summer.

**(l) Information Provision – Public Transport, Walking and Cycling**

- (i) Bus stop information - all town centre and most radial routes have been updated to reflect recent changes in the bus network where appropriate. A few stops remain to be updated and these will be completed by mid July. In addition, major changes will occur for the Pedestrian Heart. This will be a major piece of work as it will affect almost every stop point in the Borough.
- (ii) Work is continuing on a programme to provide stop specific information at more bus stops, with 10 new timetable cases installed in June.
- (iii) A new bus guide with separate maps showing daytime and evening and Sunday services has been published.
- (iv) The Darlington on the Move website ([www.darlingtononthemove.gov.uk](http://www.darlingtononthemove.gov.uk)) has been updated with an interactive bus map showing stop specific timetables. Users can click on a stop marked on the map to see the timetable for that stop.
- (v) Steer Davies Gleave have produced a range of bespoke information for disruption through the Individualised Travel Marketing programme, this includes:
  - Local Community Guides
  - Walkwise, Cyclewise, Getting the best from your car literature
  - Town Centre leaflet
  - Help with mobility information
  - Options near me guides

**(m) Individualised Travel Marketing**

- (i) Steer Davies Gleave are continuing their work on delivering Individualised Travel Marketing to households in the town. Since early May Conversationalists have been working in the Harrowgate Hill and Rise Carr areas of Darlington and recently extended their work to Branksome and the Brinkburn Road area of the Cockerton East Ward.

Participation rates are currently around 40% (that percentage of households actively taking part in the initiative). To date 8000 households have been contacted.

- (ii) As well as providing ‘tailored’ travel information the ITM team are gathering feedback from residents on transport and travel issues, which will be passed in a report to the Council.
  - (iii) The Town on the Move – ITM team are based in the Imperial Centre, Grange Road, Darlington, Tel 0800 45 49 810, email [darlingtononthemove@sdgworld.net](mailto:darlingtononthemove@sdgworld.net) . Nine local people have been recruited to deliver this programme of work between May and August.
- (n) **Travel Awareness Marketing**
- (i) A number of general marketing campaigns timed to coincide with the Town on the Move summit have now run their course.
  - (ii) Through April to June marketing campaigns have focused upon number specific initiatives; Bike to School week, Walk to School Week and National Bike Week. The Walk to School Week campaign has benefited from an Acorn organic dairies sponsored radio advertising campaign on Alpha FM.
  - (iii) In May we also took out a two-page newspaper advertisement in conjunction with the Town Centre Manager to promote Darlington town centre.
- (o) **Green Courier Service** – The Green link courier service has been contracted to operate a six week pilot operation, delivering the Council’s internal mail. The courier has been making deliveries for the Council’s Print Unit, Housing and Social Services departments, making a regular delivery to the Crematorium and picking up ad hoc work from a number of other departments. The service will be reviewed at the end of the pilot to determine if there is sufficient business for it to operate as a commercial contract.
- (p) **School Travel Plans** – Six schools (Dodmire Infants, Dodmire Juniors, Heathfield Primary, St Teresa’s RC Primary, Bishopton/Redmarshall Primary and Hummersknott Secondary) have just received School Travel Plan grants totalling £37,292 from the Department for Education & Science. These grants are to be spent on measures relevant to improving pupils’ home to school journey.
- (q) **National Walk to School Week** – For the first time, Darlington Schools have taken part in the May National Walk to School week campaign (previously Darlington Schools have participated in the October campaign only).

The Council’s School Travel Plan Officer and the Primary Care Trust’s Healthy Life Styles Officer have worked together to promote a five week walk to school week campaign involving all of the Borough’s primary schools. Individual, class and whole school prizes are on offer for those participating, with each school class collecting data on how many pupils walk to school each day. The campaign came to an end on the 1 July and results will be available by mid-July.

- (r) **Study Tour** – Nine Darlington representatives took part in a sustainable travel towns study tour to the Nordrhein Westfalen region of Germany (7-10 June 2005). This included officers from the Town on the Move team and the Council's Highway Design section, plus community representatives from the Darlington Youth Assembly and the Growing Older in Darlington Group.
- (s) **Hurworth to Neasham Footway/Cycleway** – Scheme close to completion.
- (t) **North Road Corridor of Certainty** – North Road Bus Lanes traffic signing and lining scheme being finalised for introduction of bus lanes during July/August.
- (u) **Yarm Road Corridor of Certainty** – Remaining works on Parkgate, including upgraded and realigned Puffin crossing, which were postponed until completion of the Ring Road Utility diversion works, are about to commence.
- (v) **Highway Maintenance Works** – various schemes are ongoing/due to commence/have commenced/have been carried out since the last report.
- (i) The following schemes are ongoing:
- Gladstone Street Phase 3 – footpath works.
  - Westfield Drive, Hurworth – footpath works
  - C39 Walworth Gate to Walworth Castle – carriageway edge reconstruction.
  - C39 Walworth Castle to B6279 – carriageway edge reconstruction and drainage.
- (ii) The following schemes have been commenced/are due to commence:
- B6279 Haughton Road – deep patching
  - A68 West Auckland Road – deep patching.
  - A167 Grange Road – footway and carriageway resurfacing.
- (iii) The following schemes have been completed:
- Holly Street – footpath works.
  - Archer Street – footpath works.
  - Tees Grange Avenue – footpath works.

- Shakespeare Road – carriageway patching.
- Wordsworth Road – carriageway patching.

**(w) Traffic Management & Road Safety Schemes:**

- (i) Ongoing works to provide dropped crossings for disabled persons at various locations in the town centre.
- (ii) Desmond Way cycle route works have been completed.
- (iii) Works for the final phase of the Newton Lane/Prior Street traffic calming/20 mph zone scheme are nearing completion.
- (iv) The traffic calming scheme on Coombe Drive is anticipated to begin late July.
- (v) Consultations for Firthmoor traffic calming Stages 3 and 4 are ongoing.
- (vi) Argos cycleway/refuge/bus platforms – works underway.

**(x) Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives** – a number of initiatives have been instigated including the following:

**(i) Cycle Training Activities -**

- The cycle training team is busy with a full programme delivering level two cycle courses for children in nine primary schools. The courses are due to conclude by the end of the term.
- Advanced one-to-one cycle training was requested by the management of Hummersknott School after a successful course was organised for Year 7 pupils. This is due to be completed by the end of term.
- To cope with the growing demand for training, two further instructors have been accepted for the pool of cycle trainers and another two interviews have been arranged.

**(ii) Classroom Activities -**

- Primary schools have been supplied with parental brochures and extra teaching resource books to cover the transition campaign for Year 6 pupils transferring to secondary schools after the Summer.
- In conjunction with, and complementary to the above, comics have been supplied to secondary schools for distribution to their up-coming Year 7 pupils on induction day. The teaching resource books have been reissued to enable teachers to continue the road safety lessons begun in the primary school.

- General road safety lessons have been delivered following requests from Mount Pleasant and Holy Family Primary schools.
  - The commercial firm 'Pro Truck' has continued its programme of truck safety in more of the Borough's primary/infants schools.
- (iii) Nursery Education -
- The ongoing 'People Who Help Us' and 'Hold my Hand' programmes are continuing in Borough and private nursery establishments.
- (iv) Out of School Activities -
- The Road Safety Officer delivered a cycling presentation for scouts in the Ravensdale pack.
  - Working in conjunction with Durham Constabulary, the Road Safety Officer has completed a series of presentations in several primary schools supporting the 'Junior Neighbourhood Watch' project.
- (v) Older Residents -
- The magazine 'Retired and Living in the Tees Valley' carried a joint campaign for older residents tackling the topics of general road safety and carrying grandchildren in the car using the correct restraints. This was a joint Tees Valley initiative supported by all the authorities' Road Safety Officers.
- (vi) New Appointment -
- With funding from the Town on the Move project, an advertisement has been placed to recruit a person to have specific responsibility for introducing and managing our new pedestrian training scheme for young primary children in the next academic year. Interviews are to be held before the end of the current academic year.
- (y) **Bridgework Schemes:**
- (i) A167 Oxneyfield Bridge – construction nearing completion.
  - (ii) Little Stainton Bridge – detailed design ongoing.
  - (iii) Bishopton Bridge – although the detailed analysis showed that bridge strengthening work was not required, some maintenance to the verge is needed.
  - (iv) Barmpton Bridge – consultation ongoing.



- (v) Leadyard Bridge – detailed design of major maintenance work, including deck replacement, is ongoing.

**Councillor Nick Wallis**  
**Cabinet Member with Highways and Transport Portfolio**