
OVERVIEW OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

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) **Provision of Shopmobility Service 2006/2011** – Cabinet approved the process for securing the supply of a Shopmobility Service to residents and visitors to Darlington Town Centre, through a tendering process. To ensure that the service continued through this tender process, it was agreed to extend the existing Service Level Agreement with Darlington Association on Disability until 31 March, 2007, or earlier should the tender process be completed before this time.
 - (b) **Darlington’s Second Local Transport Plan –**
 - (i) Endorsement was given to Darlington’s Second Local Transport Plan, which covered transport investment from 2006 to 2011. It was pleasing to note that the Provisional Plan was assessed as being ‘promising’ by the Department for Transport, as it reflected the wider context, whilst having an evidenced based analysis of the problems, opportunities and key choices concerning transport in Darlington. A number of suggestions for improvements were made by the Department for Transport and these were incorporated into the final document.
 - (ii) A Health Impact Assessment has been completed on the Second Local Transport Plan. This has identified two areas for further investigation, namely the health impact of introducing area wide 20 mph zones and developing workplace travel plans covering a number of major employers, linked to increasing levels of employment and active travel.
 - (iii) The workplace travel plan grant scheme has now been launched. Two local employers have already taken advantage of the scheme to provide their employees with real travel choices, that we feel will tackle traffic congestion and improve local quality of life. The scheme will be promoted to other employers via Economic Regeneration’s Interface newsletter.
 - (c) **Concessionary Fares -**
 - (i) Letters have been sent to all existing concessionary fares participants explaining the new scheme, which takes effect from the 1 April 2006. The scheme provides free travel at all times on services within the Borough area and on Arriva Service 1/1B to Bishop Auckland Hospital for eligible residents (aged 60 years and over and those meeting national guidelines for travel disability). An article explaining the scheme to all residents appeared in the March Town Crier. The taxi voucher

scheme continues to operate and eligible residents will be able to apply for £50 worth of vouchers for the twelve months from 1 April 2006.

- (ii) We have been able to fund significant elements, over and above the requirement for the statutory free bus pass, which applies within the Borough for limited periods of time.
 - (iii) We have also been involved in the development of the Local Area Agreement for Darlington and hope to provide young people aged 16 to 19 with discounted local bus travel in the future. This will build on our success in raising the half fare age limit in some rural areas to 16 from 14.
- (d) **Car Parking** – Arrangements have been made for the recently opened Cornmill Car Park to be added to the existing VMS system to assist car drivers in finding a parking space in the town centre. A new direction sign has been ordered for installation in Crown Street to provide information on space availability in the Cornmill car park and directing drivers to alternative car parks when it is full.
- (e) **Cycling Demonstration Town Project -**
- (i) Work is underway on cycle paths on McMullen Road and routes serving the Education Village.
 - (ii) A meeting has been held with the other demonstration towns and the marketing company appointed by Cycling England, to discuss how the project will be promoted nationally. Each town will develop their own local marketing campaigns.
- (f) **Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town -**
- (i) Our consultants, Steer Davies Gleave, are recruiting staff for the 2006 phase of individualised travel marketing scheduled to commence on the 22 April 2006. As Members will be aware, last year's programme provided local people with travel information relevant to their needs.
 - (ii) A 'new' marketing strategy has been agreed and will be launched with a major promotional event on the 4 April 2006.
 - (iii) The active involvement of residents, schools and business is key to the success of the 2006 campaign. To facilitate this we have developed a suite of resources encouraging people to sign up as supporters of the project, with incentives for those who actively participate. Residents will be encouraged to sign up as participants through the individualised travel marketing programme, at a town centre local travel centre and at Town on the Move events. The new marketing strategy was well received by Department for Transport representatives.
 - (iv) We have reached agreement with Arriva for the branding of the refurbished buses to be used on improved services 21, 30 and 31, with the financial support of the Council using Department for Transport Sustainable Travel Town funds.

This improvement will be launched on the 4 April 2006.

- (g) **North Road Corridor of Certainty** - Holwick Road closure and new Puffin crossing completed. Thompson Street junction improvement and signal upgrade commenced.
- (h) **Central Park Northern Access** – Works now well advanced.
- (i) **A66/A67 Morton Palms Roundabout Improvement** –Highways Agency approval being sought for the Council to tender the works.
- (j) **Highway Maintenance Works** – Three highway maintenance schemes have just commenced or are about to commence; four schemes are ongoing and seven have recently been completed.
- (k) **Traffic Management & Road Safety Schemes:**
 - (i) Taxis in Bus Lane Experiment – Safety Audit commissioned and complete. Legal works and physical alterations to have experiment commence during March 2006 being organised. There are objections from bus companies and the Police.
 - (ii) Beacon Status for Road Safety – the Council attended the final stage of the assessment process in London in January 2006 and await announcement of results in March 2006.
 - (iii) Coombe Drive traffic calming scheme is now substantially complete.
 - (iv) Welbeck Avenue – verge hardening – arrangements in hand to change the existing kerb to improve access to hardened verge.
 - (v) Firthmoor Phase 3 and 4 – works will be substantially complete by the end of March 2006.
 - (vi) Brinkburn Road Phase 3 (Major Street to Darrowby Drive [Hopetown House Access]) – Construction about to commence. The works are being coordinated with a highway maintenance scheme to minimise disruption.
 - (vii) Sadberge Village safety and traffic concerns feasibility work – Phase 1 about to commence and programmed to be complete March 2006.
 - (viii) Middleton St George – Consultation being carried out on the School 20 mph zone, speed limit alterations, village gateways and waiting restrictions.
 - (ix) Minor Local Safety Schemes:
 - Royal Oak – kerbing and island realignments to commence shortly.

- Fulthorpe Avenue – signing and lining scheme designed. Road condition survey about to be carried out.
 - Ricknall/Lodge/Lime Lane kerbing and lining adjustments to be complete by end of March 2006.
 - Low Middleton – signing and lining scheme – speed survey being arranged to inform the design process.
- (x) McMullen Road Cycleway – The scheme is 50% complete with substantial completion programmed for the end of March 2006.
- (xi) Education Village – Safer Routes to School – Work has commenced in two locations.
- (xii) Mill Lane to Stockton Road Cycleway/Footpath – A contractor has been appointed and the scheme is due to commence shortly.
- (l) **Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives** – a number of initiatives have been instigated including the following:
- (i) Cycle Training Activities
- As a result of the awareness day in November, we have trained instructors from five other local authorities to the new National Standard.
 - As a trial we are extending the invitation to schools to allow Year 5 children to participate in level 2 cycle training. In the second half of the spring term, 81 pupils from Abbey Junior School begin their training. This will help them in their role as a ‘Bike It’ school. If this is a success then another five schools will be programmed to take part in April.
- (ii) Nursery Education
- The ‘People Who Help Us’ and ‘Hold my Hand’ programmes are continuing in nursery schools across the Borough.
 - The ‘Look Alive’ resource pack is being distributed to groups on request.
- (iii) Pedestrian Training
- The second tranche of pedestrian training courses started in January 2006. A total of 445 children were trained from the six schools that had just joined the scheme.
 - At present a further six schools are involved in the third tranche. If all children complete the programme, another 573 children will receive their

certificates at the end of the course.

(iv) Poetry Day Campaign

- Bernard Young has now completed this year's round of Road Safety Poetry Days in Darlington. Eleven schools enjoyed the experience and over three thousand primary school children received important road safety messages.

(v) Theatre in Education (TIE)

- In February, five secondary schools hosted the TIE play 'Why Did The Chicken Cross The Road?' This is the fifth year the play has toured in Darlington and still continues to receive a very positive response from staff and children of the schools. The play has therefore been re-booked for a similar time next year.

(vi) Work Related Road Safety

- In response to an invitation from managers of Arriva to discuss road safety for bus drivers, arrangements have been made to take part in a 'Spring Into Safety' campaign beginning in April for all its drivers.

(vii) Radio Campaigns

- A campaign to highlight new seat belt legislation and raise general awareness about the wearing of seat belts is programmed for 16 March 2006 and throughout April.

(m) **Bridgework Schemes:**

- (i) Little Stainton Bridge – Work on site to commence shortly now that land issue is near resolution.
- (ii) Bishopton Bridge – Works to begin 6 March 2006.
- (iii) Barmpton Bridge – detailed design ongoing.
- (iv) Leadyard Bridge – Works due to begin 13 March 2006.

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