

CABINET
7 MARCH 2023

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Andy Keir, Local Services Portfolio

Responsible Director - Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides Members with an annual update on the Local Transport Plan. It outlines delivery, performance and public satisfaction in 2022/23 and seeks approval for the 2023/24 programme, including the release of funding.

Summary

2. The Tees Valley has secured significant funding from government, including the £310m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme, which will be delivered over the next 5 years. There has been good progress on the development and delivery of the transport capital programme including working in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to deliver elements of the strategic transport plan.
3. In 2022/23 a new Transport Strategy for the Borough, a Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy were adopted by Council, and work is underway on implementing the associated action plans. A progress report on the schemes delivered in 2022/23 is included at **Appendix A** and the proposed programme of scheme is detailed in the report and at **Appendix B**.
4. There is a focus by the Department for Transport (DfT) on progressing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP). Darlington has started the delivery of one of two priority schemes in the LCWIP with the creation of phase one of a cycling route on Woodland Road. An Enhanced Bus Partnership has been created to deliver improvements to bus services, this will seek to address current performance challenges and improvements despite TVCA not being successful in securing BSIP funding.
5. Transport patterns have changed since the pandemic and a period of re-basing is taking place. The Council continue to monitor transport patterns, highway condition, road safety and public satisfaction to inform investment decisions. Details of the Performance Indicators are included at **Appendix C**. These reflect the challenges being faced by public transport and a continuing requirement to invest in the maintenance of the highway asset.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that:-
- (a) Members note the progress in delivering the Local Transport Plan and agree to release £0.893m Integrated Transport Block and £2.175m Highway Maintenance Funding, to deliver the 2023/24 transport programme as identified in Appendix B;
 - (b) Members delegate authority to the Group Director of Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Local Services to agree bidding on external funding opportunities, and if successful, release the funding. This includes:
 - (i) The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP);
 - (ii) Schemes as detailed in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Delivery Plan;
 - (iii) Capability and Ambition Fund (CAF) – active travel revenue;
 - (iv) Active Travel Fund (ATF) – active travel capital;
 - (v) Tees Valley Combined Authority Levelling up Fund (LUF);
 - (c) Members note the performance data relating to transport services, detailed in Appendix C.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
- (a) To continue to deliver Darlington's Transport Strategy as set out in the newly adopted Darlington Transport Plan, Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy 2022 to 2030, which support the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan (STP);
 - (b) To maximise the opportunities to maintain the highway asset for the benefit of all road users;
 - (c) To assist TVCA in the delivery of the LCWIP and BSIP programmes, in line with Government guidance.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder implications were considered in the preparation of the Darlington Transport Plan and will be considered in the development and delivery of specific transport schemes or measures.
Health and Wellbeing	Health and wellbeing implications have been considered in the preparation of the Darlington Transport Plan and its implementation. The transport strategy seeks to achieve better health and longer life expectancy for everyone by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness from transport and by providing travel options to keep people active and independent.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	<p>Carbon emissions and their impact have been considered in the preparation of the Darlington Transport Plan and its implementation.</p> <p>The transport programme seeks to reduce carbon emissions from transport through a shift towards electric and hydrogen vehicles from petrol and diesel. The programme also seeks to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and mass public transport, as well as seeking ways to reduce the need to travel or travel shorter distances.</p> <p>Highway design, construction and asset management all seek to minimise the impact of transport through flood risk management, Sustainable Urban Drainage, recycling highway materials, low energy lighting (LED), low energy processes and electric fleet vehicles.</p>
Diversity	An Equalities and Disability Impact Assessment was undertaken in the preparation of the Darlington Transport Plan. The Plan seeks to achieve a fairer society by enabling people to access jobs, education, training, health, food and green spaces; and to achieve a better quality of life for all by improving the journey experience and minimising the negative impacts of transport such as noise, air pollution and accidents on the natural environment, heritage, landscape and people. As highway schemes have an impact on the built environment, disability groups are consulted to ensure the needs of disabled people are considered.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	There are no proposals that impact on specific groups.

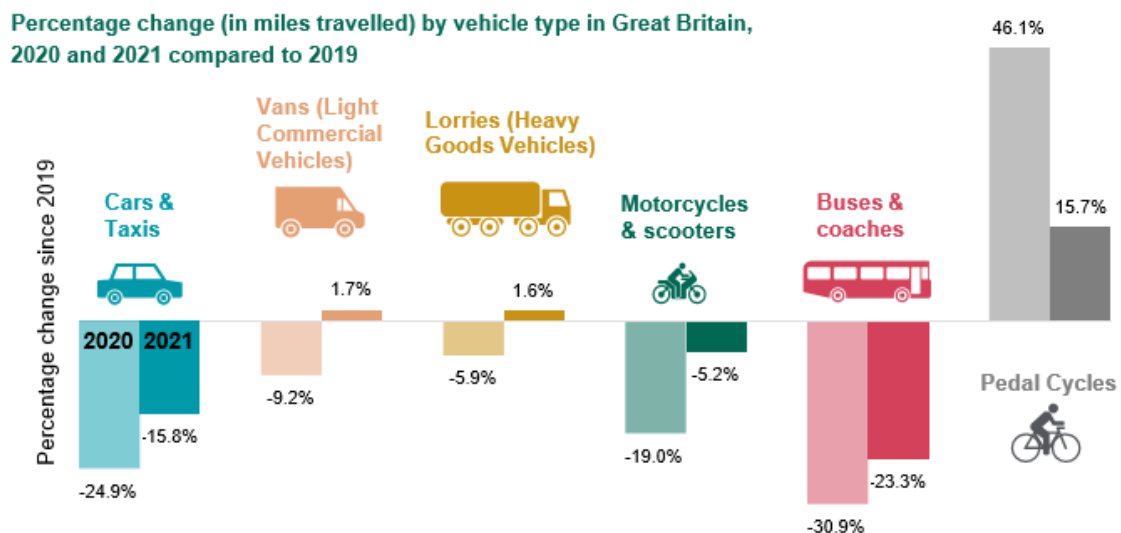
<p>Budget and Policy Framework</p>	<p>This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework. The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan was adopted by TVCA Cabinet on 31/01/2020 as the Local Transport Plan for the Tees Valley including the constituent local authorities. The Darlington Transport Plan sets out local priorities and provides an overarching policy framework for other subsidiary documents such as the Asset Management Plan and Rights of Way Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>This is a Key Decision</p>
<p>Urgent Decision</p>	<p>This is not an Urgent Decision</p>
<p>Council Plan</p>	<p>The report demonstrates how the transport programme is supporting delivery of the key actions in the Council Plan, namely reviewing and delivering a revised parking strategy and working with TVCA to deliver improved transport links within Darlington and the Tees Valley.</p>
<p>Efficiency</p>	<p>The Darlington Transport Strategy seeks to implement schemes that demonstrate value for money and/or deliver the greatest outcomes at a local level. Schemes are identified and prioritised to meet the objectives in the Transport Strategy. Maintaining the highway network will reduce traffic disruption in the longer term and improve network management. Vehicle delay has a negative impact on the economy, including logistics and freight.</p>
<p>Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers</p>	<p>This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers</p>

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

National Context

8. The Covid-19 pandemic had a marked impact on everyday life, including on traffic and the road network. From the first lockdown on 23 March 2020 to the lifting of all restrictions on 19 July 2021, people’s movement were limited to varying degrees.
9. During the pandemic, when there were fewer cars on the roads, there was a surge in active travel, such as cycling. Cycling levels decreased between 2020 and 2021 nationally but have remained above 2019 levels by 15.7%. Although cycling levels have returned from the exceptional levels seen during the pandemic, government investment in infrastructure aims to enable more people to choose walking and cycling for everyday journeys by 2030.
10. One of the biggest impacts on transport and travel resulting from the pandemic was the reduction in passenger transport demand, due to a combination of government lockdowns and fears of contracting and spreading the virus. Nationally, in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, crisis-induced changes, including hybrid working, have continued to have an impact on travel behaviour and directly impact on public transport usage. Bus operators have also been affected by a national driver shortage. In Darlington, the driver shortage led to Arriva’s passengers facing severe reliability issues. Arriva responded to this by introducing service frequency reductions and carrying out a heavily promoted recruitment drive. Service frequency remains lower than pre-covid levels overall, with individual service usage recovering at varying levels.
11. National impact of Covid-19¹ by vehicle type as shown below:



12. Recovery from Covid-19 has been further exacerbated since late 2021, with the UK experiencing increases in the cost of living. A rapid increase in energy costs, particularly

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/road-traffic-estimates-in-great-britain-2021>

the price of gas, has been a key driver of the increases in inflation, with average petrol prices being at the highest on record in July 2022. These cost of living increases have increased peoples considerations around travel choices and more thought around modal shift to active and sustainable transport, in an effort to reduce costs. Government have introduced a £2 fare cap on a single bus ticket on most services in England outside London, from January to March 2023, to support passengers over the winter months.

13. Increased inflation has had an impact on the infrastructure projects that support change and resilience. Projects have been subject to increased construction inflation², particularly for energy-intensive products/equipment, construction materials and labour.
14. The Climate Change Act commits the UK government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero emitter) by 2050. Transport is the largest contributor to UK domestic greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for 27% in 2019. Nationally, targets have been set, with a commitment that there will be no sales of petrol and diesel vehicles past 2030, and all new cars and vans to be fully zero emission at the tailpipe from 2035.
15. In March 2022, government published 'Taking Charge: the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy', which sets out the vision and action plan for the rollout of electric charging infrastructure in the UK. The transition to zero emission vehicles will help the UK to meet legally binding climate change targets and Darlington has a crucial role to play at a local level in enabling the transition, in proactively supporting the delivery of the rollout of EVCPs and helping to ensure that the transition is integrated into wider local transport and community needs. The roll out of charging points in car parks has commenced with a Tees Valley wide strategy for on street charging being led by TVCA to ensure a consistent, high quality product is delivered.

Regional Context

16. The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) is the local transport authority for the Tees Valley. They set the Strategic Transport Plan for the region for the period 2019-2029 with the vision to "Provide a high quality, quick, affordable, reliable, low carbon and safe transport network for people and freight to move within, to and from Tees Valley".

Darlington Transport Policy

17. In November 2022, Council adopted the Darlington Transport Plan, Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy 2022 to 2030, following a consultation process. The Darlington Transport Plan sets out how the priorities set out in the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan (STP) will be delivered in Darlington and provides the strategic framework to support growth in Darlington, through improved transport infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable and active transport initiatives.

² <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/75ee36ed-21f7-4d7b-9e7c-f5bf4546145d/monthly-statistics-of-building-materials-and-components>

18. Investment in transport in Darlington, is closely aligned to the objectives of the Darlington Transport Plan which are to:
- (a) Reduce transport's impact on the environment and support health and wellbeing;
 - (b) Improve safety for all road users;
 - (c) Connect people to job and training opportunities and link communities;
 - (d) Support a revitalised and transformed Darlington town centre and;
 - (e) Maintain and effectively manage a resilient transport system.

Progress on delivery in 2022/23

19. Over the last 12 months there has been significant capital and revenue investment in transport in Darlington. This includes working in partnership with TVCA on developing transport initiatives that benefit Darlington residents. Details of what has been delivered can be found in Appendix A.

Proposed delivery in 2023/24

20. The Council receives a specific allocation from TVCA each year to deliver local improvement schemes and highway maintenance priorities. In addition, the Council receives additional specific funding allocations to deliver specific schemes within the Borough that contribute toward our transport strategies and the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan. This section of the report outlines the schemes proposed to be developed during 2023/24.
21. A programme of highway maintenance schemes will be delivered including structural maintenance of highways (roads and footways) and bridges. The programme is based on condition data and details are included in Appendix B.
22. The Integrated Transport Block programme will be delivered to manage and improve the highway network. Details are also included in Appendix B.
23. Darlington rail station improvements will continue, with the main construction work due to commence in Spring 2023 and continue until Spring 2025. The major works to Darlington rail station and transport interchange will be delivered by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd (WDC) on behalf of TVCA. BAM (Construction) Ltd are delivering the Station Enhancement Project within the existing station for Network Rail; providing additional platforms and improved facilities.
24. Darlington, Stockton and Durham Councils are working to develop the 26 mile walking and cycling route along the alignment of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR). A Development Officer based with Durham County Council co-ordinates the work of the three authorities. Darlington is currently investigating funding opportunities for sections of the route.
25. Work is continuing on the design of the Cockerton/Woodland Road roundabout improvement schemes. The schemes will be submitted for planning approval over the coming months.

26. Bus stop improvements will be progressed for a number of new housing sites including Heighington, for which Darlington requested a S106 contribution towards improvements, where the relevant trigger point for the release of funding has been met.
27. 20mph schemes have been designed for St Bede's Catholic Primary School, St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Hurworth School (secondary) and Federation of Abbey Schools (schemes on Abbey Road and Cleveland Terrace). A Safer Route to School scheme has also been developed for Reid Street School. Consultation will take place in Spring 2023 with the schools and local residents and subject to support the schemes will be programmed for implementation later in the year.
28. The traffic calmed areas within Firthmoor, Eastbourne and Banktop will be consolidated into area wide 20 mph zones. They are currently a mix of traffic calmed areas and smaller 20mph zones mainly due to the stringent requirements to introduce 20mph zones under the previous guidance in place at the time of their construction. The guidance has changed and we are looking to consolidate these areas into 20mph zones, which will provide a more consistent message to motorists when they are entering these lower speed neighbourhoods.
29. The need for a car club in the Town Centre was identified as part of the Parking Strategy and the Town Centre Transport Plan. It is envisaged that it will support the Town Centre Strategy particularly in terms of encouraging more people to live in the Town Centre. The feasibility for the Car Club will progress with the expectation it be operated by a commercial operator but may initially require some funding for start-up costs.
30. In order to encourage more people to cycle to the town centre, we aim to increase the number of covered, secure cycle parking areas in the town centre, as identified in the Darlington Parking Strategy and Town Centre Transport Plan.
31. In addition to the Darlington Council transport programme we will continue to work in partnership with TVCA on transport initiatives that benefit Darlington residents:
 - (a) The Active Travel Hub programme is set to continue in 2023/24, with further emphasis on local community engagement and public consultation, to support the delivery of the local authority and TVCA's ambitious vision for the LCWIP, with capital funding from Active Travel England (ATE).
 - (b) Wheels 2 Work will continue into 2023 to further promote the opportunity provided by the scheme to support Tees Valley residents to access employment and training opportunities where transport is identified as a barrier. In 2023 RCVDA will be working with Sustrans, the Active Travel Hub operator, to explore how the e-cycle Wheels 2 Work offer and the services provided by the Hubs can be aligned to enhance active travel as a viable commuting solution.
 - (c) Further to the provision of off-street EVCPs, it's been agreed that TVCA will develop an EV Infrastructure Strategy, which will ensure we secure quality and consistency in delivery across Tees Valley, which will consider options for those who don't have residential provision. This work will consider where infrastructure is needed and what the best model is for future phases of delivery.

- (d) TVCA and the local authorities are currently procuring contractors for the maintenance and upgrade of all bus shelters across the Tees Valley. This will ensure a consistency of provision and that all shelters are appropriately maintained.
- (e) Further progress on LCWIP schemes funded through CRSTS and the TVCA Levelling up Fund (LUF) will be made in 2023:
 - (i) Following consultation, it is anticipated that work on the second phase of the walking and cycling scheme on Woodland Road, from the Hollyhurst Road junction westwards to the roundabout junction with Staindrop Road will start following completion of phase one.
 - (ii) Feasibility study on Phase 3, the continuation of the route from Cockerton, along West Auckland Road, linking the economic development site at Faverdale, West Park and Burtree Garden Village.
 - (iii) A feasibility study for a cycling and walking route from Yarm Road to Teesside Airport and Business Park, providing safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclists between Darlington town centre/rail station and the Airport, will be completed by Autumn 2023. This will identify a preferred route that is deliverable and will produce an outline budget cost to enable TVCA to consider its priority in their LCWIP programme and allocate a budget and timeframe for delivery, if it is supported by them.
 - (iv) TVCA have been successful in their LUF bid, which includes improvements to walking and cycling in locations across the Tees Valley. The section identified in Darlington is proposed to link Linear Park in front of Bishopsgate House to the Towns Fund regeneration areas around Northgate. This is ultimately connect the town centre to the RHQ.
- (f) Improvements to the Urban Traffic Management Control System (UTMC) which will enable better management of the highway network and improve the efficient movement of buses will be delivered by TVCA in 2023/24. The delivery programme includes:
 - (i) The upgrade of the UTMC system;
 - (ii) Expansion of traffic signal connectivity to enable further development of a Smart Region approach to traffic management;
 - (iii) The repair, service & reinstatement of traffic counters to enable strategies for traffic management to be implemented;
 - (iv) Additional CCTV cameras linked back to control rooms;
 - (v) Bus priorities module for the prioritisation of vehicles at junctions to reduce delays on buses;

- (vi) Dynamic journey time routes, providing real-time and accurate travel time information of transit vehicles to assist passengers in planning their trips to minimise waiting times;
 - (vii) ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras to provide journey time data;
 - (viii) Diversion routes for unplanned events and;
 - (ix) VMS signs to support major events, roadworks, incidents, and road safety campaigns around the Tees Valley.
- (g) TVCA will continue to make progress on the bus Enhanced Partnership, delivering benefits for bus and improving the current offer to passengers. This will include:
- (i) Working with operators to understand and seek to influence their decarbonisation plans for the Tees Valley, whilst exploring all grant funding and commercial opportunities to support in decarbonising their fleets;
 - (ii) Improving the efficiency of the highway network and assisting bus punctuality through UTMC improvements on the following key corridors:
 1. A68 West Auckland/Woodland Road
 2. B6280 Yarm Road
 3. A167 North Road
 4. B6279 Tornado Way.
 - (iii) Improving the fare offer by, simplifying the current range of zones and enhancing the multi-operator ticketing offer under the existing Smartzone brand, and also the implementation of Tap on Tap off on all buses in the Tees Valley, which will make travelling by bus, for the best price, easily accessible and less confusing to passengers;
 - (iv) Carrying out further feasibility work to ensure that the identified CRSTS bus improvement interventions are deliverable within the allocated budget, managed by TVCA. The impact of interventions will be assessed using various sources, including Analyse Bus Open Data (ABOD), DfT supplied traffic speed/congestion data and open communications with bus operators. By utilising these sources, TVCA will compare bus punctuality before, during and after implementation of the interventions, including in real time through the UTMC system. This will ensure that investment in bus priority is maximised.
- (h) Funding through the CRSTS programme will deliver the Tees Valley Digital Transport Strategy for the next five years from 2022 to 2026. The strategy identifies a number of digital and transport needs of the residents, businesses and key stakeholders in the region. This user-centric approach ensures that digital solutions will be developed that meeting these needs and solve real issues and challenges. This strategy supports the wider Tees Valley Digital Strategy, which sets an ambitious target of becoming the UK's first Smart Region by 2032, covering the three foundations of digital

infrastructure, innovation and inclusions and skills. This digital programme of investment will benefit all road users.

(i) TVCA are progressing the development the concept of a Tees Valley transport brand which that can be used for multiple purposes from general travel information to the promotion of new infrastructure and campaigns. The objectives of this brand are:

(i) To provide timing travel information for users of public transport;

(ii) To promote different ways to travel around the region and try to influence consumer behaviour to make sustainable modes first choice, and;

(iii) To communicate the transport improvements and investments we are working on around the region.

Performance and Public Satisfaction

32. During the year monitoring information is collected and used to measure performance as to how the transport system is operating and being used by the public. In addition to this, each year Darlington takes part in the National Highways and Transport Network Public Satisfaction Survey. This data is set out in Appendix C.

Financial Implications

33. In April 2022, the Secretary of State for Transport confirmed that Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) was to receive the full allocation of £310m of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding to invest in local transport networks.

34. CRSTS consolidates funding from previous allocations of the Highways Maintenance Block, Potholes Fund and Integrated Transport Block, to ensure that Local Highways Authorities can carry out their responsibilities under section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network.

35. TVCA has allocated £3,067,984 to Darlington Borough Council in 2023/24, as part of a long-term settlement until March 2027.

36. In January 2023, TVCA were awarded £485k through the Capability and Ambition Fund (CAF) to support capability building activities that enable ambitious and inclusive active travel programmes, and deliver behaviour change initiatives that result in sustained increases for everyday walking, wheeling and cycling. This includes delivery of the Tees Valley Active Travel Hubs and Personalised Travel Planning programme. An announcement on CAF, including bidding guidance for funding beyond March 2023 is awaited, and TVCA will submit the bid as LTA.

37. TVCA awaits the bidding guidance from Active Travel England, for the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4. The prioritisation set out within the Tees Valley LCWIP will be used to identify further cycling and walking infrastructure schemes that require investment.

38. TVCA have been successful in their LUF bid, which includes improvements to walking and cycling in locations across the Tees Valley. The section identified in Darlington is

proposed to link Linear Park in front of Bishopsgate House to the Towns Fund regeneration areas around Northgate. This is ultimately connect the town centre to the RHQ.

Legal Implications

39. The statutory duty for the Local Transport Plan moved to Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2016, as part of the devolution deal. TVCA produced a Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan to fulfil this duty, which was approved by TVCA Cabinet on 31 January 2020.
40. The five constituent local authorities were asked to produce a Local Implementation Plan (Darlington Transport Plan). This demonstrates how Darlington Council, as the highway authority will support the delivery of the Strategic Transport Plan at a local level and sets out local priorities, policies and actions. Adopted as part of the Councils policy framework in November 2022, it draws together other local policies on parking, asset management, traffic management, Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and links to other corporate plans, including the Council Plan.
41. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society pursuant to which the Council is subject to the 'Public Sector Equality Duty'. This requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This is relevant in the context of transport policy making, where for example the change or cessation of services may disproportionately impact protected characteristic groups. The Council will observe its Public Sector Equality Duty in policy and schemes relating to transport.

Estates and Property Advice

42. The highway maintenance programme will be works within the adopted highway and does not require corporate landlord advice. Any modifications to the adopted highway will be notified to the Highway Asset Management Team.
43. Any individual scheme that involves a land requirement outside of the adopted highway, whether that be Council owned land or land in third party ownership, will involve the Estates Team to negotiate land acquisition or other legal agreement. If a scheme cannot be implemented within the adopted highway or permitted rights the required planning permission will be sought at an early stage in the process.

Procurement Advice

44. All procurement activity will be in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Where a suitable framework is available for a procurement this will be used in the first instance. Applications to Tees Valley Combined Authority for funding will be subject to a robust due diligence process which includes procurement, legal and value for money. All procurements will be in line with the requirements of any subsequent grant funding agreements from TVCA or any other funder.

45. TVCA has undertaken a number of procurements some of which require call off contracts by Darlington Borough Council to deliver programmes at a local level. Procurement and legal advice will be provided to ensure that Darlington Council procurement procedure rules are adhered to.

Equalities Considerations

46. The equalities impact of individual schemes and policies is considered as they are developed. As most of the work programme involves changes to the physical environment the main impacts that are considered relate to disabilities, including mobility, visual and hearing impairments and learning disabilities. Regular meetings are held with Darlington Association on Disability and other advisory groups such as RNIB and Guide Dogs are involved for specific issues.

Consultation

47. No consultation has been undertaken for this report. However, the programmes proposed in the report are aligned with the new transport strategies that were subject to public consultation.
48. Consultation continues on individual schemes including the 20mph schemes at school sites, changes to individual bus stops, the Woodland Road walking and cycling route and the major schemes at Woodland Road roundabout and Cockerton roundabout.

Outcome of Consultation

49. Responses to individual consultations are used to propose final scheme designs and are agreed under delegated authority.
50. The Local Transport Plan was presented at the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee on 9 February 2023. The deadline for production of this report prevented comments of the Scrutiny Committee being included.