

**COUNCIL**  
**25 JANUARY 2024**

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**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform and update Members on the Leader's Portfolio since the last meeting of Council. The following are some of the areas of work under the Leader's Portfolio.

**Strategic Transport**

2. The following sections provide an overview of some of the work progressed in partnership with TVCA on the strategic transport portfolio relating to Darlington.

**Strategic Transport Programme**

3. TVCA have developed a programme of schemes that could feature in the Department for Transport's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) round 2. This will be subject to a TVCA Cabinet report on 26 January 2024. The Department for Transport have also indicated larger increases in Highway Maintenance settlements from 2025/26 that will require pipeline of maintenance schemes to be developed by Local Authorities during the next financial year.

**Darlington Station**

4. Work on the Darlington Station project continues to progress. On the Eastern Gateway element of the scheme, where the new station building and multi storey car park is being built, the steelwork was completed prior to the Christmas break. The project is now moving into the next phase, which will see the external brickwork commence.
5. Also, on the eastern side Network Rail has established their site compound and begun their enabling works. A communications strategy will be rolled out to passengers at the station from the beginning of January, ahead of hoardings being installed from the beginning of February, to enable works to commence to the retail units and ticket office area. A new temporary ticket office will open from mid-March.
6. On the Western Gateway preparatory work is continuing ahead of the demolition of the remaining properties that have been acquired.

## **Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP)**

7. Following the Arriva service withdrawals and the introduction of a number of subsidised services from summer 2023, using Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) funding, there has been agreement in principle that Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) will extend these through to March 2025, subject to procurement. In Darlington this includes:-
  - (a) Services 6/6A – continuation of the new service (6/6A), which connects Darlington and Stockton via the Airport and includes Hurworth (replacing the previous service 12)
  - (b) Services 17 and 18 – reinstatement of hourly service between Mowden and Darlington (replacing part of the previous service 3), and reinstatement of hourly service between Darlington and Harrowgate Farm (replacing part of the previous service 3A).
  - (c) Services 3 and 4 – Reinstatement of late Monday – Saturday evening, and a Sunday daytime service.
8. From the BSIP / BSIP+ funding which has been awarded to TVCA, £4.991m remains available and will be used to deliver elements of the Tees Valley 5-point Bus Service Improvement Plan which are unfunded, with a particular focus on:-
  - (a) Working with the operators to identify options around fare offers
  - (b) Making improvements to bus shelters and timetable information
  - (c) Delivering service marketing and promotional campaigns
9. Furthermore, to support the BSIP priority around decarbonising the bus fleet, TVCA has worked with Arriva and Stagecoach to submit a Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) round 2 bid which seeks to support the operators to invest in the infrastructure at their depots and introduce an electric bus fleet on some of the Tees Valley routes. Should the Tees Valley bid be successful, then we could see up to 62 electric buses being implemented across the Stagecoach Stockton depot, and Arriva Redcar and Darlington depots.

## **Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant (TSOG)**

10. A funding bid for £2.5m has been submitted to the Department for Transport to fund the replacement of obsolete assets, improve network performance, reduce maintenance requirements, and deliver energy / CO2 emission reductions across the Tees Valley. In Darlington the most aged assets identified for replacement are:-
  - (a) Yarm Road / Hewitson Road pedestrian crossing
  - (b) Victoria Road / Sainsbury's pedestrian crossing
  - (c) Northgate / Chestnut Street pedestrian crossing
  - (d) Yarm Road / Hundens Lane junction traffic signals
  - (e) Northgate / John Street junction traffic signals

## **Climate Change**

11. The Climate Change Cross Party Working Group was held on 21 December, where we welcomed Cllr Scott to the Group as the Conservative member. The Group discussed the outcomes from COP28, the recent government reshuffle and future guests at Group meetings. The Group also discussed climate emissions related to procurement and commissioning.

## **External Meetings and Engagement**

12. The following are some of my external meetings since the last Council meeting: briefing from Simon Hoare MP (Minister for Local Government), Transport for the North, TVCA Cabinet, Citizenship Ceremony, Mayor's carol service, unveiling of the Library plaque to record those who worked on the restoration of the Library, visit to meet Sue Jacques at Darlington Memorial Hospital, ANEC board.

**Councillor Steve Harker**  
**Leader of the Council Portfolio**