

**COUNCIL**  
**26 SEPTEMBER 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**

**Bus Service Improvement Plan**

2. Within the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), there is an aspiration to enhance the customer experience for users and a key part of this is to provide up to date and accurate information, under one brand identity, in a timely manner.
3. As a result, TVCA has now taken on responsibility for the updating of at-stop information and is collaborating with local authorities to make improvements. A full update across all bus stops is substantial as there are a total of 2,592 bus stops with information cases across Tees Valley at which timetable information is provided.
4. Due to slight re-timings to current Arriva and Stagecoach services, information at 1,476 stops needed to be updated as a priority from the end of July. This means that current timetable information is available at all stops where the current infrastructure has allowed.
5. In total, by the beginning of September 1,930 stops have been visited, checked and updated. Whilst the existing information in the remaining 662 stops is still accurate as they were not affected by the July 2024 re-timing changes these will be visited and inspected over coming weeks.
6. Later this year TVCA will be rolling out a new timetable template which will include information to make it easier for passengers to know who to speak to if they are unhappy with their journey and will promote the TVCA 'Improve My Journey' webpage.
7. In addition, work is ongoing to replace the Real-Time Passenger Information with a new system which is due to go live in November 2024 and replace the current obsolete displays with 90 modern display screens.

**Darlington Station**

8. Work on the construction of the multi-storey car park and station building at Darlington Station is continuing to be delivered on programme and completion of the first section of the building is expected to be completed in September 2024, with final completion and handover to Network Rail / LNER for fit out in February 2025.

9. Alongside the TVCA led works, Network Rail continue to make good progress with their parts of the project. The completion and handover of the first section of the building will enable Network Rail to begin the preparation work for the installation of the new footbridge later this year.

### **Active Travel and Bus Priority Improvements**

10. A major public engagement exercise was carried out in July / August setting out proposals to improve the bus infrastructure across the whole of Tees Valley and also enhance the infrastructure for those walking, wheeling and cycling.
11. Overall, there was support for the schemes put forward and the public feedback will now be used to help inform the next stage of design of these schemes. Further details are expected to be published on each scheme later this year.

### **City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 (2027-2032)**

12. Further work has been commissioned to develop the projects identified and agreed by the TVCA Cabinet in January 2024. TVCA is working with all local authorities and key stakeholders on the development of the programme.
13. TVCA is engaging with the new government, but is awaiting clarity and guidance on future funding beyond the current devolved transport settlement.

### **Strategic Infrastructure**

#### **Local Area Energy Plan**

14. TVCA is liaising with all local authorities in relation to the commissioning of a series of Local Area Energy Plans for the region. This work will look at the net zero landscape in the region and consider areas, including: the energy distribution networks (gas and electricity); building fabric, including insulation; heat pumps and solar panels; and electric vehicle charging requirements. The plans will set out proposals to inform future energy needs and the transition to net zero.

### **Climate Change**

15. The last meeting of the Cross-Party Working Group was on 18 July, where Cllr Snedker was re-elected as Chair of the Group. The Group had a presentation from SSE who presented their potential approach to a district heat network in Darlington. The Group also discussed the forthcoming offsetting strategy – due to be presented at Cabinet in October.

### **External Meetings and Engagement**

16. I have attended various meetings and engagements since the previous meeting of Council, some of which are listed below:
  - (a) Visit to National Horizons Centre, meeting with Professor Vikki Rand

- (b) Film Premiere of “Iron & Steam The Dawn of the Stockton & Darlington Railway”, produced by Lonely Tower
- (c) Meeting with Phil Forster, Teesside Airport
- (d) Visit to see newly completed DBC build housing on Neasham Road
- (e) Met with Civic Enforcement and CCTV staff following the disorder to thank them for their excellent work
- (f) BBQ with young care leavers
- (g) Citizenship Ceremony
- (h) Visit to Baltic Apprenticeships
- (i) Rail North Committee
- (j) Darlington Town Deal Board
- (k) Raised the flag at the start of the Cycling Championships Day 2 leg which started in Darlington
- (l) Attended CPI’s 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration – with their Darlington office 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year
- (m) Aura Infection Control visit and award presentation to a local dental practice
- (n) Attended Dame Carol Black’s visit to the STRIDE partnership
- (o) Transport for the North Board

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