

**COUNCIL**  
**15 MAY 2025**

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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.

**Darlington Station**

2. Delivery of the Darlington Station project continues at a pace and ahead of scheduled completion at the end of this year when south-bound high-speed long-distance trains and trains between Darlington and Saltburn will begin to use the new platforms. Whilst trains between Bishop Auckland and Saltburn are expected to continue to use the same platforms as now.
3. The TVCA-led work to the multi storey car park continues to make good progress with the lifts currently being installed within the car park and external landscaping work having started. The final scope for the associated highway works has now been agreed with Darlington Borough Council and highway authority agreement is being progressed, which will enable the multi-storey car park and station building to come into operation at the end of the year.
4. The East Coast Main Line was closed during six weekends throughout February and March to enable works to be carried out at several sites including Darlington station. Network Rail completed track and infrastructure work to the Dinsdale/local lines, as well as work to facilitate the track for the new platforms. During these closures, the first two spans of the new footbridge were successfully lifted and slid into place. The third span (which doesn't require a weekend railway closure) is due to be complete by the end of April. Network Rail are also continuing with the fit out of the new station concourse, including installation of the mechanical and electrical equipment, plastering, and installation of the escalators.
5. TVCA, along with support from Darlington Borough Council, have been actively progressing the outstanding survey / environmental cleaning work that is required in advance of the remaining demolition work for the Western Gateway scheme. Demolition is expected to commence from the beginning of May and be complete by late summer, which will then allow the highway and public realm improvements work to commence later in the year. We are currently working closely with LNER to agree the sequencing of the main works to ensure this aligns with their plans for the Porte Cochere.

**Active Travel and Bus Priority Improvements**

6. Across Tees Valley, the development of several active travel and bus priority improvement schemes continues ahead of delivery commencing later this year. Specifically in Darlington, statutory consultation on the Northgate to Darlington Town Centre and the

Woodlands Road Phase 2 schemes are expected to commence in late April / early May 2025 and works on site are expected to start at the end of summer.

7. Other schemes identified as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme are also continuing to progress with the statutory consultation phase expected later this year and delivery commencing from late 2025 or early 2026.

#### **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) update**

8. Contracts have been put in place for the supported services, as outlined at the previous meeting, enabling these services to continue from 1 April.
9. At the TVCA Cabinet meeting on 27 March 2025, it was agreed to introduce a new bus pass for Tees Valley care leavers ages 17-25. TVCA are currently working with the bus operators to finalise the details for how this will operate, and further details will be announced shortly.

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

10. TVCA are continuing to work with the Department for Transport and Government in relation to the previously announced City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement for the period April 2027 to March 2032 (referred to as CRSTS2). A programme was agreed by TVCA Cabinet in January 2024 based on the previously announced £978m of funding and work has begun, over the last 18 months, to develop these projects.
11. TVCA is currently awaiting the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review in June, at which it is expected clarity will be given as to any amounts of devolved transport funding that Mayoral Combined Authority from 2027 onwards.
12. Transport has been identified with government as a joint shared priority for the local growth plan, with recognition that our Tees Valley aspirations can't be achieved without improvements to transport accessibility and travel experiences to better connect workers across the region to employment and industrial sites.

#### **Climate Change**

13. The Cross Party Climate Change Working Group met on 24 April, where the members heard progress updates from the Assistant Directors of Community Services and Environmental Services & Community Safety.

#### **External Meetings and Engagement**

14. Since the last meeting of Council the following are some of meetings and events I have attended:
  - (a) Citizenship Ceremony
  - (b) Town Deals Board
  - (c) Visit with Take Root Bio Ltd
  - (d) Various TVCA Cabinet and Transport Committee meetings

- (e) S&DR 200 Railway Pioneers Exhibition at Hopetown
- (f) YMCA Listening event
- (g) Various Transport for The North, and Rail North meetings
- (h) Quarterly meeting with PCC's office
- (i) The Mayor's Ball
- (j) Darlington Foodbanks
- (k) Darlington Building Society's AGM
- (l) MP briefing

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