

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 DECEMBER 2008

STATEMENT OF THE BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN FORT

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Skipton Highway Office Move

The County Council's highways office at Skipton is moving from its existing premises on Carleton Road to a new purpose built office on the Snaygill Industrial Estate. North Yorkshire staff will join with Jacobs, our consultants and Balfour Beatty, our maintenance contractor in the new offices, with the highways services provided at Carleton Road being transferred to the new site from November 24. The merger of the three parties will create an integrated workforce and will provide an enhanced service to the public.

This development is part of the ongoing depot enhancement programme with new or improved facilities already having been provided at Thirsk, Stokesley, Pickering and Selby. Work is also currently underway at Brompton-on-Swale (where the Richmond team will relocate to) and Ingleton (which is a sub depot).

Ripon, West of Market Place, Access Road

The new access road between North Street, at the junction with Coltsgate Hill, and the new supermarket development off Blossomgate in Ripon was opened to traffic on Saturday 22 November 2008.

At the same time all the traffic management and traffic diversions that were set up whilst the construction works took place were removed and the road network will revert to the original arrangement.

The £650,000 works have been carried out by Harrogate based contractor Houseman and Falshaw and designed and supervised by Mouchel. The work originally scheduled for completion in January 2009 has been completed 10 weeks early, primarily due to the early completion of the statutory undertakers service diversion works.

The works comprised the construction of 160 metres of new carriageway with adjacent footways and boundary walling designed to reduce the effect of noise on adjacent properties.

Following the opening of the new access road traffic flows around Ripon will be assessed over a couple of months to see how the new arrangements are working. The County Council will then consider if further changes should be made in consultation with the public.

Bedale – Aiskew – Leeming Bar Bypass

Members will recall last time I reported that following approval by the Executive in May 2008 work had begun on the production of the major schemes business case (MSBC) for the Bedale – Aiskew – Leeming Bar Bypass (BALB). I also reported that officers had met with officials from the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber and the Highways Agency to discuss the scheme and that a meeting with the Department for Transport (DfT) was also planned.

Officials from the DfT visited North Yorkshire on 2 October 2008 to discuss the scheme and to meet with the project team. The visit went well and the submission of the MSBC to the DfT was approved by the Executive on 2 December and, at the time of writing, the final finishing touches were being made before it was to be submitted. The next stage of the project is the DfT appraisal of the MSBC which should take approximately 6 months to complete. The BALB scheme seeks to address environmental and road safety problems arising from the increasing dominance of traffic on the important A684 east – west route and has been endorsed by Yorkshire and Humber Regional Transport Board for funding out of the regional funding allocation.

Scarborough Integrated Transport Scheme

Work on the £30m Scarborough Integrated Transport Scheme (SITS) is almost completed and has been delivered by the County Council, assisted by the Borough Council. SITS is made up of a package of transport improvements that together seek to reduce congestion, improve safety and address noise, air quality and community severance issues both in the town itself and on the main A64 and A165 approaches. The main components of SITS are:-

- Two new park and ride sites on the A64 Seamer Road and the A165 Filey Road providing 1200 new parking spaces in total
- Traffic management schemes such as new traffic signal junctions in the town and on the A165 and A64 to provide benefits for buses and all other traffic
- New computer control system for traffic signals to ensure efficient signal operation and to minimise delays
- A165 Scarborough Leebberston Diversion – a new road to address safety and congestion issues on this main route into the town

At the time of writing the A165 Scarborough Leebberston Diversion was due to open fully to traffic on 12 December 2008. The A165 & A64 Park and Ride sites will be in operation for the school half term week in February 2009 to coincide with the seasonal demand at that time of year. It had originally been hoped to operate the sites before Christmas but unfortunately this was not possible because of delays associated with poor weather and problems with the electricity supply to the park and ride buildings. The main disruption to progress on SITS has been the weather. Adverse conditions delayed the scheme and as a consequence construction operations have been more heavily focused upon the completion of the Scarborough to Leebberston diversion.

95 Alive – Christmas Drink Drive Campaign

The Festive Season is a focal point when office and domestic parties, events and general making merry is widespread and, as a consequence, there is a higher than average consumption of alcohol. The York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership '95 Alive' is once again carrying out a high profile preventive publicity campaign in support of high profile police enforcement operations. Last year's campaign was very successful with a 50% increase in the number of roadside tests administered by North Yorkshire Police and a 28% reduction in positive results. The percentage of positive tests throughout York and North Yorkshire was well below the national average. This year's campaign will focus upon the two main themes of "I'll be Des" and "The Morning after the Night Before".

"I'll be Des" was used successfully in 2007 and asks people to have a designated driver for their night out to ensure that everyone gets home safely. "The Morning after the Night Before" seeks to highlight the time needed for alcohol to leave the body before driving after a night out. Advertisements will run in the local papers, community magazines and on local radio and this will be combined with promotional material such as ice scrapers, drinks mats and tyre depth gauges to highlight the two key themes. The campaign was launched at Catterick Garrison on Thursday 27 November 2008 and the launch event included a photo opportunity showing 176 men, women and children representing the number of people killed or seriously injured in drink related crashes over 3 years (2005 – 2007) in York and North Yorkshire. The event provided a stark and graphic illustration of what the data represents in real people and human terms and why it is important to keep addressing the issue of drink driving through campaigns and targeted enforcement activity.

Timber Freight Quality Partnership

As part of the North Yorkshire Timber Freight Quality Partnership (FQP), the County Council working alongside the Forestry Commission held a seminar at the Dalby Forest Visitor Centre on 27 November 2008 on the subject of Timber Transport in North Yorkshire. The seminar aimed to improve knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting timber transport in the County and to look at ways of reducing the impact on the highway network.

The event formed part of the programme of activities associated with the County Council's 'Centre of Excellence for Local Transport Delivery' status. Over 50 delegates attended the event including representatives from the timber industry, the National Parks, Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber and other local authorities. Delegates listened to presentations covering a broad range of topics from speakers with a wide range of backgrounds. The event was concluded with a discussion forum looking at how specific timber transport issues could be resolved.

The seminar has helped to promote the role of the Timber FQP and its aim to ensure that an important part of the local economy can further develop whilst at the same time keeping damage and disruption to the roads in the County to a minimum.

DEVELOPMENT & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

Planning Policy

The Yorkshire and Humber Assembly has started the process of updating the Yorkshire and Humber Plan – the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The current RSS was published in May of this year but it was always the intention to start work on a “mini-review” immediately after its publication in order to take account of the Government’s forecasts for additional housing numbers. The current review will also take account of recent decisions on Eco-Towns and Growth Points within the Leeds City Region. The County Council will work with District Councils in inputting into the review.

Notwithstanding the current conditions in the economy and the housing market, the RSS is looking ahead to 2026 and the region is required to plan for this period in order to meet the national targets for housing. The current review of the RSS will be looking at how the region can accommodate additional houses in the range 476,000 to 528,000 up to 2026. This will be a challenge for the region as this represents an annual rate of building of between 23,800 and 26,400. Current assumptions of annual housing completions are based on a figure of 15,000, rising to 19,000 after 2016.

The RSS review will consider the distribution of this housing growth across the region. Within this context recent decisions on the approach to housing growth in the Leeds City Region will be significant. Firstly, the Government’s recent announcement on Eco-Towns has confirmed that it does not intend taking forward proposals for a free-standing Eco-Town within the City Region but instead will work with partners to take forward the alternative approach put forward of developing urban eco communities. This will enable urban regeneration within four locations in the metropolitan areas of the City Region to be developed on Eco-Town principles – in Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees and York. The second element relates to taking forward New Growth Points. Housing growth proposals in Barnsley, Calderdale and Wakefield have been put forward by the City Region. A fourth element for growth in South Craven was not taken forward following a decision by Craven District Council. Part of New Growth Point proposals is to seek additional investment in infrastructure needed to unlock development sites.

JOHN FORT