

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 OCTOBER 2010

**STATEMENT OF THE HIGHWAYS AND PLANNING SERVICES
PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD**

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Winter Damage Programme

Members will recall that the extreme weather last winter left a legacy of damage to the county's road networks. As a result around £2m of emergency repairs were carried out to keep the roads safe into the spring and a further £10m was re-directed towards funding for longer term repairs.

The design and procurement of these repairs is now well advanced and a number of schemes have already been completed on the ground. Inevitably with such a large programme of works there will be a degree of disruption to the travelling public, but officers have been working hard with local communities to keep this disruption to a minimum.

Some of the more major projects are about to start, including a significant programme in and around Harrogate and also works on the A684 near Northallerton and on the A170 Sutton Road. To minimise disruption a number of local schemes on the A170 are being combined but this still means that the road leading to Sutton Bank will be closed for around 5 weeks.

The target is to complete the vast majority of the programme by Christmas.

Winter Review and Procurement

Now that we are well into October, I am pleased to be able to confirm that we are once again fully prepared for the winter season. Last year's national salt shortages did lead to concerns that some authorities would find it difficult to fully restock during the summer. Again I can confirm that we in North Yorkshire have not experienced this problem and our normal stock levels have been fully replenished for the start of the winter season.

I can also confirm to Members that our winter policy remains as robust as in previous years and we continue to treat well over 50% of our network on a routine basis which far exceeds national guidelines.

You will all be aware that I have recently attended Area Committees alongside Councillor John Fort, who, as the former Executive Member, had led a review of the winter service following the experiences of last winter. This has led to proposals for the creation of a salt reserve and also for community engagement in delivering the winter service. Recommendations on these proposals will be presented to the Executive on the 19 October 2010.

In Year Capital Funding Reductions

You will recall that at our last County Council meeting Councillor John Fort informed Members of the in year cuts to transport funding required by the Department for Transport. To remind Members the main cuts to capital funding were a £2.12m (25%) reduction in our Integrated Transport allocation and a £4.54m (25%) reduction in our £18m RFA allocation.

Since the last County Council meeting, we have been working to revise the Integrated Transport and RFA programmes to accommodate these cuts. A revised Integrated Transport programme was approved in August and a revised RFA programme was approved by Executive on 28 September.

This has not been an easy process and inevitably some Members and the public will be disappointed that we have removed schemes from the programmes however I do feel that we have managed to achieve a good balanced approach that has no impact on maintenance budgets and minimises the impact on other priorities especially road safety and local accessibility.

Local Transport Plan 3

Members will be aware that we are currently preparing our third Local Transport Plan. Both nationally and locally there has been some concern over the difficulties of preparing third LTP's when we don't yet know the details of the coalition government transport policies or their funding plans.

We have received guidance from the Department for Transport on the future of LTP's. The guidance supports the LTP process and encourages us to give local transport issues a high priority. It also reminds us that it remains a statutory duty to have a Local Transport Plan and that the current plans run out in March 2011. It is therefore clear that we must have a new LTP in place for 1 April next year.

It is important to get our third LTP in place as soon as possible in order to recognise the changed economic climate since LTP 2 was adopted and to bring in new approaches to delivering our transport service in the light of the substantial funding reductions. We therefore intend to present LTP 3 for County Council approval in December. If necessary, and depending on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, we may bring a supplementary document to the March meeting.

Communication Improvements

I am in the process of reviewing the Communication process within Highways especially. The driving force shall be to improve the involvement and knowledge of developments within Highways of local members. Also we shall seek to improve communications to both members and the general public when events of acute importance develop, especially emergency road closures.

And finally.....

Since taking up my new position I have been heartened by the dedication and commitment of all staff across the Directorate. This is more than worthy of a mention against a background of financial uncertainty, where Officers have never wavered in their passion and drive to deliver for the people of North Yorkshire. We ought to recognise this now and in the future.

GARETH DADD