

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**19 February 2014****STATEMENT OF THE LEADER
COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WEIGHELL****Highways and Transport**

At this meeting in which we will be spending a large amount of our time setting the Council's budget I would not ordinarily refer to budget issues in my Leaders statement. However, on this occasion, I want to make an exception in relation to one issue, which is a proposal to invest a further one off sum of £5m into our highways maintenance programme. I have written to the Secretary of State asking for the Government to at least match this figure. If more funding can be provided by Government I will endeavour to find more funding from our Reserves that we can tackle some of the maintenance concerns with the network that I know exist.

North Yorkshire has one of the largest road networks in the Country with over 5000 miles of roads. The main roads in the County have some issues but are largely in a reasonable state of repair but my particular concern is with the deterioration of our more rural roads.

I am meeting the Secretary of State on 27 February 2014 when I will be discussing with him and Andrew Jones, the MP for Harrogate, the business case that we have developed for extra investment into the Harrogate Rail Line. Through our Local Transport Body we have identified a total of £12.6m to contribute to this project. This funding will enable us to improve the infrastructure and increase the frequency of services along the line and we are asking the Government to provide funding to modernise and upgrade the whole line through electrification.

When I meet the Secretary of State I am hoping to also raise the important issue of upgrading the A64 in North Yorkshire which the Prime Minister referred to at Prime Ministers Question time recently. This is an issue which the Council has championed over many years as it is so vital for communities in both Scarborough and Ryedale.

Local Enterprise Partnership

Investment in our transport network is just one of the issues that is covered in the Strategic Economic Plan which has been drawn up by the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership. Considerable work has been put in place to identify the investment priorities and opportunities for North Yorkshire. By the time of our Council meeting I hope to have been involved in a discussion with other

colleagues from East Riding, York and North Yorkshire with Greg Clark the Minister responsible for this aspect of Local Enterprise Partnerships and Lord Michael Heseltine. I will be making as strong a case as I can for the Government to help fund the priorities that we have set out.

In terms of the Leeds City Region, there is currently a live debate around governance structures for this partnership. There has been a recent formal Government consultation on the establishment of a West Yorkshire Combined Authority. I will be involved in discussions over the coming months about how North Yorkshire can work in partnership with the West Yorkshire Councils' from outside a West Yorkshire Combined Authority. It is clearly in our interests for West Yorkshire as a sub region to be as successful as it possibly can. However, it is important that we have our own successful economic partnership covering the whole of North Yorkshire. I would not want the establishment of a West Yorkshire Combined Authority to adversely affect that and we need to watch closely how events will develop over the coming months.

Assistant Chief Executive for Legal and Democratic Services

Many Members will know that Carole Dunn, who heads up the Council's Legal and Democratic Services and who acts as the Council's Statutory Monitoring Officer, is due to retire at the end of March. I can inform the Council that we have now appointed Barry Khan to this role. Barry will take up his appointment early in April after moving to us from a similar role that he is currently undertaking at Stockport MBC. This will be Carole's last meeting of Full Council and I am sure Members would want to join me in extending our best wishes to her for her retirement.

JOHN WEIGHELL