

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**18 FEBRUARY 2015****STATEMENT OF THE HIGHWAYS AND PLANNING SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER
COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD****Highways and Transportation****Winter Maintenance**

At the time of writing we are heading into another period of cold and very wintry weather. Winter operations have been ongoing despite some challenging situations with periods of rain, sleet and snow affecting the durability of salt applications. However, routes have been treated in line with our policy and our highway officers and gritting teams are to be praised for keeping North Yorkshire on the move. Where necessary operations were carried out 24 hours a day and regular salt deliveries are ensuring that we are still well stocked and prepared for the rest of the winter period.

A684 Bedale Aiskew Leeming Bar Bypass

The contract for the design and construction of the scheme was awarded to Wills Bros. in August 2014. Since award Wills Bros have been progressing detailed design and discharge of planning consents. They have also undertaken some preparation works including fencing, additional site investigation and pre works archaeology investigations. To date the archaeological excavations have concentrated on the site of a Roman villa, the sub-structure of which was found to be in better condition than had been expected and has been classified by English Heritage as a site of national importance. However very few artefacts have been found at the site and it is now believed that the site was dismantled prior to being abandoned in the 4th Century AD.

The scheme is programmed to be complete in Autumn 2016 and is currently on time and within budget.

Highways Grass Cutting

Since my last update I have, in conjunction with David Bowe, Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services met with a number of Members who made representations on behalf of a number of their constituent Parish Councils regarding the proposed changes to the frequency and extent of highways related grass cutting – in brief the proposed changes are:

- in urban areas (posted speed limits of 40mph or less) we will provide junction related visibility cuts only and that these visibility splays will be cut 5 times during the season;
- we are not proposing any changes to the rural (where the speed limit is more than 40mph) road grass cutting standards.

At the time of writing this statement contractual discussions with Ringway have just concluded and we will be writing to all stakeholders (Town/Parish Councils, Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Council etc.) confirming the new rates that will be paid should they, as part of their

local initiatives, undertake grass cutting and include the highways related grass cutting on behalf of the County Council.

The County Council Executive will receive a report on 24 February confirming the changes and the anticipated saving. The proposed changes would take effect from 1 April 2015.

Highway Maintenance Funding

On 23 December 2014 the Government announced our highway maintenance funding settlement for next year and coming years.

The formula has changed slightly this year meaning that we will receive more than expected, for 2015/16 we have been allocated £29.650m. Indicative allocations for future years through to 2021 could amount to exactly the same sum however the Government have introduced a new incentive element where a percentage of our funding is dependent on how we adopt Asset Management principles for our highway network and how well we make maintenance efficiency savings. This incentive element could be worth up to a total of about £23m over the next 5 years and so making sure that we maximise our funding is a high priority in BES.

In addition to the above the Government have also introduced a new Local Highway Maintenance Challenge Fund. Details were announced on 23 December last year and the bids were submitted on 9 February. We have submitted our maximum of two bids, one small scheme bid for about £6m for the exceptional maintenance of Selby Bypass and one for approximately £22m for landslip prevention at Kex Gill on the A59 and on the B6270 road into upper Swaledale.

You will all probably remember that after our July 2014 meeting I circulated a short Member briefing setting out details of our highway maintenance funding. Following this meeting I will circulate an updated version taking into account all of the changes I have just spoken about.

Planning Services

York Potash

Members may wish to note that the likely date for the determination of the planning application for the proposed York Potash minehead and underground mineral transport system by the North York Moors National Park Authority has been further delayed at the applicant's request pending further explanation and amendments to the submitted documents. Submission of a 'clarifications' document, updates to the Environmental Statement and amendments to the Transport Assessment will require that a re-consultation exercise is undertaken before the National Park Authority can determine the application. It is understood that the revised Environmental Statement will contain a recalculation of spoil quantities generated from the Mineral Transport System tunnel excavations and additional project programme information. The applicant has acknowledged that this will have implications for the timescale for determining the application, a new date for which has not yet been set. The County Council's response will be reviewed and updated as appropriate prior to submission in the light of the new information and further consultation.

GARETH DADD