

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

9 NOVEMBER 2016

STATEMENT OF THE HIGHWAYS, ROAD SAFETY, ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE (INCL BROADBAND, MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE) AND PASSENGER TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR DON MACKENZIE

Highways and Transportation

Winter Service

Preparations for winter are complete. We hold 55,000 tonnes of salt in our barns and all grit bins and heaps are topped up. Our fleet of gritters has been expanded to 93 in number, the average age has been brought down below 5 years, and they are all ready to go. We have held refresher sessions with our winter service team, which is totally committed to the delivery of this high-priority service.

Update on Bridges

Our intensive efforts to repair and widen Tadcaster Bridge continue. High water levels have delayed progress in the river where piling works are currently running 24 hours a day, and 7 days a week, in order to make up for lost time. Each stage of the reconstruction programme is being approved by the Environment Agency. The rebuilding of the arches will start this month. Planning permission and listed building consent to widen the bridge were given in a commendably short time by Selby District Council. Matching stone has been quarried, cut to size, and stored on site ready for use. The Executive approved acceptance of the £1.4m grant from the YNYER LEP to fund the improvement works.

The Executive also approved acceptance of a further grant of £1.8m from the LEP towards the cost of replacing Dalton Bridge and raising the highway which leads to it. The bridge gives access to the Dalton Industrial Estate whose businesses have been regularly affected by closure of the bridge and access road by flooding. This investment, in partnership with Hambleton District Council and local businesses, secures local jobs and offers the potential for expansion of the estate, to the benefit of the wider economy.

Cawood Bridge over the River Ouse is a Grade 2 listed structure, opened in 1872. It has been covered by flood water on several occasions, most recently last winter. We introduced a structural weight limit of 7.5t earlier this year, which caused difficulties for bus operators, and in turn for their passengers. The decision was subsequently taken by the BES Director and Executive Members to invest in a £1m strengthening of the structure, which will raise the weight limit to 10t. Our bridge engineers are currently devising a procedure to carry out this work involving the shortest possible period of closure, since we need to minimise the disruption to road and footpath users, as well as marine traffic.

A684 Bedale Bypass

This 4.3km bypass of Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar was opened to great acclaim on 11 August. Works to complete the landscape planting will commence this month. Public reaction has been largely positive, with comments referring to improved journey times and better conditions in the villages thanks to a reduction of about 40% in through traffic.

A174 Sandsend Coast Protection

The Sandsend Coastal Stabilisation scheme was officially opened on 19 August. The works included the stabilisation of the landward slope above the A174, provision of additional parking and replacement of the coastal revetment. Local residents have expressed their gratitude for the efforts we made to keep them informed and to minimise disruption during construction works.

Some local media reports have highlighted superficial spalling of the concrete revetment. Whilst this does not affect the integrity of the structure, repairs will be carried out.

Harrogate Relief Road

One of this council's top transport priorities is a Relief Road for Harrogate, which is our largest urban settlement and where congestion of the highways infrastructure is increasing on account of new house-building and a strong visitor economy.

Work is underway on a review to consider the need for, and alignment of, a Harrogate and Knaresborough Relief Road. Four options have been considered, all including a bypass of Killinghall. The review will also consider complementary sustainable transport measures. A member-led steering group has been established and progress is being made public on a special section of the County Council's website and through local media. We hope to be able to submit a bid for funding within 18 months. Early estimates suggest a scheme cost of about £100m.

The Harrogate Area Committee will receive a briefing at their meeting on 17 November.

A59 Kex Gill

A review of options to improve the resilience of the key A59 Trans-Pennine route at Kex Gill has begun. We are working closely with the Department for Transport in order to stress the importance of this route for the economy of North Yorkshire, and as a strategic east-west corridor for the North of England.

Broadband and Mobile Telephony

As your observer at SFNY Board meetings, I can report that procurement under Phase 3 of our programme to deliver superfast (>25Mbps) broadband to every premise in the county is progressing well. We expect to award the contract to the successful bidder by June 2017. The value of this phase is £20.5m and this should lead to a further 12,500 households and businesses being connected, at an average cost of £1500 per premise. This compares with average connection costs of £177 under Phase 1 (150,000 premises) and £559 under Phase 2 (15,000 premises).

We continue to have high level meetings with the principal mobile phone companies. Our aim is to give whatever support we can to speed up the provision of 4G connectivity throughout the county.

DON MACKENZIE