

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

13 NOVEMBER 2019

STATEMENT OF THE ACCESS PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR DON MACKENZIE (INCLUDING HIGHWAYS, ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORT, BROADBAND, MOBILE TELEPHONY)

Flooding in Swaledale and the UCIs

On 30 July persistent, heavy rainfall affected Swaledale causing significant damage to infrastructure and flooding of homes and businesses. As part of a multi-agency response the County Council acted to help communities recover as quickly as possible. A key part of this response involved the reinstatement of damaged roads and bridges.

Within a few weeks temporary structures were built next to Cogden North Bridge on the B6270 and Grinton Moor Bridge on the C106, allowing the roads to be re-opened. Design work for the two permanent replacement bridges is well underway and construction is planned to start in the spring, funded by a £3m exceptional award from the Department for Transport. Other locations on our highways network were also affected. I take this opportunity once again to thank our officers and contractors for the excellent work they carried out, often in very bad weather, to ensure that the disruption caused to the community by the storm damage was remedied so quickly.

It was very disappointing that, in spite of the prompt construction of the temporary bridge on Grinton Moor, and the wonderful efforts on the part of the local community to prepare for the arrival of the elite cyclists on the final day of the UCI World Championships, the race had to be diverted away from Swaledale because of further prolonged rainfall in the second half of September.

I pay tribute to all our highways personnel involved in the preparation for, and staging of, the UCI Cycle World Championships. Some 1400 competitors from 90 countries took part, watched by many thousands of spectators along the race routes and in and around Harrogate. Thanks to their efforts, the nine days of races took place successfully and safely for all concerned.

Harrogate Congestion Study

The Executive considered a report last month on the findings of the public engagement on the Harrogate Congestion Study. More than 15,000 opinions represented the largest ever response to a public consultation ever held by the county council.

There was unanimous agreement to approve the recommendations to develop a package of sustainable transport measures and to encourage the use of public transport. Whilst the option of an inner relief road will not be pursued at this time, our officers have been given the go-ahead to assess further the case for a Killinghall bypass and a link road to the west of Harrogate.

Winter Gritting Service

Preparations for winter are complete. We hold 55,000 tonnes of salt in our barns, and grit bins and heaps are full. We have a fleet of 86 modern gritting lorries, including some purchased recently from a Ripon-based manufacturer, as well as snow blowers. We have held refresher sessions with our winter service teams, all totally committed to the delivery of this high-priority service. More than one hundred farm contractors are on hand to support us in rural locations. We are all ready to go.

Our winter maintenance budget is £7m and we routinely treat 54% of our roads, one of the highest proportions in the country. Working in partnership with our contractor, Ringway, we delayed the start of our service standby until 15 October as a cost-saving measure, but still delivered the necessary treatments on the weekend of 6/7 October when temperatures fell below zero. Full details of our winter service can be found here:

www.northyorks.gov.uk/gritting

A59 Kex Gill Diversion

Plans to divert the A59 trans-Pennine route northwards away from Kex Gill to a more stable alignment have moved forward in recent weeks.

Three public drop-in events to explain re-alignment of this trans-Pennine route were held last month. These sessions, in Skipton, West End and Harrogate, were attended by the County Council's project officers and by representatives of the design consultancy firm, WSP. Almost 200 visitors had the opportunity to see the detailed designs, to view the plans and to watch a 3D computer-generated model of the re-aligned road, which runs along the top of the north side of the gill. The 5.4km long diversion is single carriageway with climbing lanes westwards for slow vehicles.

NYCC is about to submit a planning application for the new road, and has already sent a final business case to the Department for Transport to secure funding. An official notice asking for expressions of interest from construction companies, ahead of shortlisting next month, has been published.

Last month the Executive approved a report seeking authority to take all necessary steps to make the Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order to acquire the land needed for the new route, should such Orders be needed. As always, every effort will be made to secure the land by negotiation. There are over 20 different landowners involved and a total land area of 33 hectares.

Subject to granting of planning permission, approval of funding by the Department for Transport, and on the assumption that the Secretary of State does not call for a public enquiry, it is hoped to start construction work next spring and have the new road finished by summer 2021. The cost of the whole project is estimated at £43.7m of which £4.95m has already been set aside in NYCC's capital budget.

A1(M) Junction 47

This intersection of the A59 and the A1(M) is of strategic importance. The county council will complete later this month design work for a £5.19m scheme to improve safety and capacity both at this location and nearby at the junction of the A59 and the A168. Tenders will be invited next month and work is planned to start on site in March. Construction is expected to last for ten months and the majority of work will be undertaken overnight to minimise traffic delays.

Broadband and Mobile Telephony

Our Local Full Fibre Networks project, which is valued at £15.1m and will lay fibre to 370 public buildings over the next 18 months, commenced at a primary school in Brayton, near Selby, last month. This scheme represents a further significant enhancement of the county's digital infrastructure.

We welcome the recent announcement that the Government and mobile network operators will each contribute £500m towards the upgrade of mobile phone coverage in rural areas. Once ratified, this scheme will introduce a shared rural network to address partial not spots. It

is expected to improve 4G availability from just over 60% as now, to over 90% of the geography of North Yorkshire.

DON MACKENZIE