

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 26 October 2016 at 10.00 am.

**Present:-**

County Councillor Andrew Backhouse in the Chair

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Robert Baker, Michael Heseltine, Robert Heseltine, Peter Horton, Bill Hault, David Jeffels, Penny Marsden, Bob Packham, Andy Solloway, Richard Welch and Robert Windass

Other Members present were: Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie

NYCC Officers attending: Andrew Bainbridge, Team Leader LTP (BES), Ian Kelly, Countryside Access Manager (BES), Graham North, Policy Support Officer - Rail (BES), Barrie Mason, Assistant Director - Highways & Transportation (BES) and Jonathan Spencer, Corporate Development Officer (Central Services)

Present by invitation: David Smurthwaite, Strategic Manager - Planning and Regeneration (Craven District Council) and secondee to York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP

One member of the public was in attendance.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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**110. Minutes**

**Resolved -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**111. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**112. Public Questions or Statements**

The Chairman acknowledged that he had received notification from the Mayor of Ripon City Council, Cllr. Dr Adrian Morgan to speak regarding the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway reinstatement. He noted that this would be taken at item 6 of the agenda – Passenger Rail Update.

**113. Highways Major Schemes List Review**

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services updating

Members on the process and progress of the major highway schemes review.

Andrew Bainbridge presented the report. He explained that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the process and progress of the major highway schemes review. The review was linked to the County Council's Strategic Transport Prospectus. A major scheme was defined as a highways scheme costing in excess of £5 million. This typically included highway infrastructure such as bypasses, relief roads and larger bridges.

Referring to section 3 of the report and Appendix A, Andrew Bainbridge reported on the historic major scheme proposals comprising of 23 schemes. He explained about the potential blight on any properties close to or on any preferred routes of a potential scheme and the financial risks to the County Council where properties were directly affected.

Andrew Bainbridge went on to section 4 of the report detailing the changes that had occurred over the past five year regarding how major transport schemes were now funded. Funding was not linked to local economic growth. He then referred to section 5 of the report detailing the reasons why there was a need to review the historic major scheme proposals. Schemes which had no realistic potential for development needed to be removed, especially in light of the changed funding landscape, and the fact that their continued existence on the list unjustifiably raised expectations of local communities.

Referring to section 6 of the report, Andrew Bainbridge reported that an initial sift had been undertaken to identify which of the schemes met the objectives set out in the YNYER LEP Strategic Economic Plan and an overall contribution to economic growth. For schemes that did not meet the criteria there were two options: either to remove the proposal completely from the major schemes reserve list or to retain the scheme on a low priority reserve list. With reference to section 7 and section 8 of the report, he noted that Members whose divisions were in each of the scheme areas had or would shortly be consulted on their view on the officer assessments. Local planning authorities had also been consulted. BES Executive Members would be updated on the outputs of the review in early 2017. A final decision would be made by the Executive.

***County Councillor Bob Baker advised Members that whilst he did not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in the item, he wished it to be known that he was a shareholder of land to the south of Northallerton.***

Andrew Bainbridge confirmed that a preferred route had not been adopted for the Northallerton bypass.

Members made the following key points:

- A Member said that he was surprised by the number of historic schemes on the list and noted that a review of the list was overdue in view of the austerity measures faced by the County Council. Referring to paragraph 5.1 of the report he asked for the definition of 'foreseeable future'. Andrew Bainbridge replied that 'foreseeable future' related to the period up to 2030. Whilst this might appear to be a lengthy time period, it took at least seven to nine years to deliver schemes such as bypasses. Various statutory processes needed to be gone through before projects were 'shovel ready'. The timescale for longer term projects was up to 2045.
- A Member commented upon the traffic congestion problems on the Hopgrove

roundabout. Andrew Bainbridge replied that although the A64 was a Highways England road and so was not the County Council's responsibility, the County Council was working closely with Highways England and lobbying government about making improvements to the A64.

- A Member commented that for him a key measure for a scheme to be on the major schemes list was the extent to which it could deliver economic benefits. The Harrogate Relief Road was a key priority in that regard. He said that when he looked at a number of other schemes on the list they represented more of a wish list than schemes that would become a reality. In relation to the option to have a low priority reserve list, he asked if such a list could lead to planning blight. Andrew Bainbridge confirmed that if schemes were on a low priority list there would still be a risk of blight. He went on to say that the aim of the review was to remove as many schemes as possible in order to minimise the risk of blight. The purpose of having a lower priority reserve list would be in terms of schemes that whilst not important in the near future could potentially be realized in 30 years' time.
- A Member asked how much priority was being given by the County Council to a North Harrogate bypass. He said that Harrogate town was now almost at grid lock and the situation would only get worse in the absence of such a scheme. Andrew Bainbridge confirmed that a Harrogate relief road review had commenced. This involved looking at a number of different options to address the current traffic congestion issues. The major congestion was on the A681, A61 and around Bilton. The majority of traffic in Harrogate was local; surveys had shown that most of the traffic had an origin or destination in Harrogate so the term 'relief road' rather than 'bypass' was being used. He referred the Member to the County Council's website which provided the latest position on the Harrogate Relief Road. Executive Member County Councillor Don MacKenzie explained about his role in chairing the Relief Road Steering Group.
- A Member said that he acknowledged that a number of schemes on the historic major scheme proposals list which were in Craven district would not realistically see the light of day. However he said that there was a strong case for including on the list the A65 road bridge at Coniston Cold in Craven district. Due to its narrow width it was damaged on a regular basis leading to often lengthy queues especially during holiday periods on what was a very busy A-road. He said that he had attended a local Area Highways meeting and had been informed that there was an 'amber light' for the bridge to be widened. The estimated cost of the works was £2 million. Barrie Mason said that the County Council had given an undertaking to look at various options and to report back to Members. It was not a straightforward situation as there were historic and environmental considerations to take into account regarding the bridge. In terms of where the works could be funded from, he explained that because the cost would be below £5 million, if the go-ahead was given it would be included in the capital programme and not on the major schemes list. Funding considerations were the driver for deciding whether or not a scheme was included on the major schemes list.
- A Member asked to what extent did both the County Council and the respective district councils and the LEP consult with each other in those instances where growth across the county would have impacts on the roads infrastructure. He said that unplanned incremental growth posed a real weakness to the county's road infrastructure. He asked on what basis did the County Council consider, other than at a development control level, the implications of increased traffic on the local road network when a proposal came forward that had clear

implications for the local highways network. Andrew Bainbridge confirmed that the County Council was fully involved in such discussions and a number of County Council officers had been seconded to the LEP. The County Council flagged up those situations with the LEP and district councils where there was a need for major changes to the road infrastructure. It also tried to be proactive by working with the LEP and district councils from day one when they were planning for potential growth opportunities.

- A Member asked if the County Council could stipulate appropriate changes to the highways infrastructure being carried out prior to a development taking place. He also asked what recourse the County Council had when a developer did not carry out those changes. Barrie Mason said it was important that in the first instance the County Council applied the test of 'reasonableness' when imposing such conditions so that it was not seen as unnecessarily stifling development. Inevitably the County Council needed to look at each situation on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes development could not operate until the highway infrastructure was in place. In those circumstances legal agreements were put in place so that the County Council could use Section 278 agreements between the County Council and the developer. He said that at an early stage of a planning application the County Council outlined what was required in terms of infrastructure improvements. Wherever possible planning needed to be undertaken on an area level to ensure that a development could be realized in its entirety. This would avoid the situation of some sites within a local area being able to be developed whilst others could not because the infrastructure was not in place.

#### **Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

#### **114. Civil Parking Enforcement Annual Report**

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services providing a review of the countywide Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Barrie Mason introduced the report. He referred to section 2 and 3 of the report, explaining that the report provided an overview across 2014/15 and 2015/16. He reminded Members of the legal agreements that the County Council had with Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils, and mentioned about the traffic management benefits that CPE brought.

With reference to section 4 of the report Barrie Mason summarised the financial position of CPE. Expenditure had remained relatively static in 2014/15 and 2015/16 but both Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils had made back office efficiencies in those periods.

Barrie Mason then referred to section 5 of the report and appendices 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b, which provided a penalty charge notice analysis at a county and district level. He noted that the PCN per visit indicator provided an effective way of monitoring compliance with parking restriction. On average one in every five to six visits to the same area resulted in a Penalty Charge Notice being issued. The percentage of PCNs paid had remained constant at 82%. 15% of all PCNs issues were either cancelled or written off. This was reflective of the reasonable approach taken when considering representations. Only a very small proportion of cancellations were the result of an

error by the Civil Enforcement Officer.

Barrie Mason concluded by noting that people on the whole wished to see enforcement being taken where parking was a problem. In this regard enforcement was concentrated in the market towns and schools. Also where a body of evidence had been built up targeted enforcement took place in more specific locations.

Members made the following key points:

- A Member referred to paragraph 4.6 and asked what the CPE surplus was being spent on. Barrie Mason explained that strict criteria were in place regarding what CPE could be used for, as set out in the Traffic Management Act 2004. He referred to the Key Decision taken by the Corporate Director BES in consultation with the Executive Members for BES on 25 May 2016 where it had been agreed the following: Up to £500,000 per annum is allocated for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 for major scheme development and traffic model updates/renewal; Up to £100,000 per annum is allocated for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 to implement schemes to address Air Quality Management Areas across the county; and Up to £100,000 per annum is allocated for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 towards sustainable transport initiatives
- A Member asked if there was an opportunity in some areas for the funding to be used to improve road surfaces and road markings. Barrie Mason replied that of the CPE surplus, £0.54 million contributed towards the Highways Maintenance Budget including improving road signage and line markings.
- A Member asked how closely the County Council worked with Traffic Enforcement Officers when introducing Traffic Regulatory Orders such as yellow lines. He said that there was a need to ensure that those areas were regularly patrolled by the Traffic Enforcement Officers in addition to areas where there were longstanding TROs in place. He also asked if Traffic Enforcement Officers could be provided with number plate recognition devices to help assist the Police. Barrie Mason said that when TROs were being considered, discussions were held at an early stage with the respective district councils – Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils – regarding the enforceability of the proposed TRO. Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils made the decision about the scheme and when to enforce. With regards to providing Traffic Enforcement Officers with a device to link into the ANPR system, Barrie Mason said that he would check with colleagues about how achievable this would be.

#### **Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

#### **115. Passenger Rail Update**

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services providing an update on short term rail priorities for North Yorkshire and providing an overview of the recently awarded Northern and TransPennine rail franchises.

Andrew Bainbridge introduced the report. He referred to section 2 of the report setting out the background and policy context.

Referring to section 3 of the report and Appendix 1, Andrew Bainbridge explained that the York-Harrogate-Leeds rail line remained the highest priority for rail investment in North Yorkshire. A joint Harrogate Borough Council, North Yorkshire County Council and YNYER LEP working group had been set up to develop an outline proposition for a Harrogate Town Centre and Stations Area Growth Agenda.

The County Council had also committed funding to carry out an Access to HS2 and Conventional Rail Study with a number of stations identified as priorities for early work as detailed in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

Andrew Bainbridge then referred to section 5 of the report providing an update on the Northern and TransPennine Rail Franchise. He said that the service being provided under the new franchises represented a substantial improvement over that of previous years. He noted the key commitments that the franchises were required to deliver as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report. He also referred to Appendix 2 which provided a more detailed route by route assessment of the franchise improvements to be made in North Yorkshire.

Members made the following key points:

- A Member said that the new rail franchises had lots of plans but the timetable for them to materialise was slow, including for some relatively minor improvements. He asked if the franchisees could be asked to speed up the pace of change such as installing ticket machines sooner than the planned date in 2018. Andrew Bainbridge replied that the timescales had been set out and agreed in the franchises. However the County Council would of course try to advance things more quickly but it was only one local authority across several in the whole franchise area. The good news was that the planned improvements would happen and some of the improvements were already being progressed by the franchisees.
- A Member stated that government transport policy was mixed up; there was a focus on HS2 but then it was being linked into an ageing local rail infrastructure. Transport projects at a national, regional and local level should be done in conjunction. Andrew Bainbridge replied that the Northern Powerhouse and Transport for the North were moving in the right direction but he acknowledged that there was still a three tier transport system – national, regional and local. It was down to the County Council at the local level and partners working at the regional level to lobby to improve connections through the three tiers. Graham North added that the improvements set out in the franchises provided the first step towards that, including increasing the number of trains running hourly.
- A Member said that he welcomed the improvements set out in the report and said that it was good news overall for North Yorkshire's economy and for its residents. The ability to now be able to get a train from Scarborough to arrive in London at the start of the working day was to be applauded.

**Resolved -**

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That an update report be presented to the Committee in autumn 2017.

The Chairman then invited Dr Adrian Morgan to address the Committee to speak about

the campaign to reinstate the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton Railway Line.

Dr. Adrian Morgan made the following statement:

“Since addressing the Transport, Environment and Economic Scrutiny and Overview Committee in April 2015, the following events have happened relevant to and having a bearing on the Campaign:

1. The above proposal was mentioned on the penultimate page of the October 2015 North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) Strategic Transport Prospectus but delivery not expected until 2045!
2. NYCC Executive Committee turned down an application in August 2015 for £18,000 towards a benefit/cost analysis.
3. A Leeds-Newcastle journey time of 60 minutes on Northern Hub wish list.
4. NYCC Update on Rail Developments and Priorities by the Assistant Director, Highways and Transportation dated 26th August 2016 published totally overlooking the needs of and benefits to Ripon of a railway station.
5. Frequency of Leeds-Harrogate rail service increasing from two to four trains an hour by December 2017 announced in new Northern franchise.
6. Kings Cross-Harrogate service increasing to every two hours by 2019 announced by new East Coast franchise operator using new Class 800 bimode trains.
7. Intention to build Harrogate Western Bypass costing £90m to ease congestion in central Harrogate particularly in the peaks published.

Although mentioned in the 2015 NYCC Strategic Transport Prospectus as eight words, the delivery date is not until 2045. This is far too distant for the prosperity of Ripon and surrounding area. Both the campaign Committee and Ripon City Council strongly feel that this railway is urgently needed for connectivity and the prosperity of Ripon and hinterland.

Austerity was the reason given by the Executive Committee of three for refusing an application for £18,000 for a feasibility study into reinstating this rail link. Grants far in excess of this amount have been awarded in the County for other transport related projects.

The Northern Hub has published a proposed rail journey time of sixty minutes between Leeds and Newcastle but without a target date. The route is not the current one via York as York is not included so we have to assume that this is an extension of HS2/HS3 beyond Leeds which is not planned until post 2035.

This has been another excuse for NYCC Executive delaying support for a reinstated rail link through Ripon stating that this will just duplicate routes. However to achieve a target time of sixty minutes Leeds to Newcastle, Ripon will not be considered as a stop on any high speed route and neither will Harrogate be. Therefore, Harrogate and Ripon will need their own route to the North and that has to be reinstating the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton line.

The NYCC August 2016 Update on Rail Developments and Priorities paragraph 3.1 states:

1. Transformational changes to the Leeds-Harrogate-York line delivering improved journey times, increased frequency, modern high quality rolling stock and customer service and ultimately electrification.
2. Access to HS2 hubs within 40 minutes for 85% of the County population.
3. Access to a railway station within 20 minutes for 75% of the population.

Transformational changes may happen on the Harrogate Loop but Harrogate passengers will still take an hour longer than necessary and an enforced change of

trains at York to travel to Northallerton and stations beyond without reinstating the Harrogate-Northallerton route.

Ripon is currently more than 40 minutes from an HS2 hub and more than 20 minutes from a current railway station by public transport and definitely more than 20 minutes by car in the peaks. Reinstating the Ripon station will correct this and increase connectivity for those living within 20 minutes of Ripon.

In the same update, £275,000 is being spent by NYCC on "Access to Rail" studies for most market towns in North Yorkshire with rail stations. This works out at £30,000 per study except Harrogate that is getting £75,000 for the same study.

Ripon is being disadvantaged thrice in that we do not currently have a railway station, has been refused funding for a study to achieve this aim and is not receiving a slice of the £30,000 improvement investment cake per market town because we do not have a railway station.

The DfT has instructed Arriva, as part of the winning bid for Northern, that service frequency between Leeds and Harrogate must be increased from two to four trains per hour for most of the day and two trains per hour instead of one in the evenings from December 2017. The winning bidder of the East Coast franchise is proposing to introduce Kings Cross-Harrogate trains two-hourly from 2018. This will be difficult to implement as siding space to accommodate these trains during layover in Harrogate station, until time to return to Leeds, was removed in the 1990s. This was not appreciated by Network Rail or both operating companies until I questioned them about capacity in late 2015.

My suggestion to Network Rail was to install the former Dragon Junction between Harrogate and Starbeck, and two sidings on the old Ripon line with one siding extended to Bilton Lane and basic single platform station there concurrently with re-signalling and upgrade of the Harrogate-York line in 2018. This would provide space for the terminating Leeds-Harrogate service, twice an hour, to layover and turn back together with the Kings Cross service out of the way of through services on the "main line". The trackwork and signalling would be a similar cost to providing sidings at Harrogate station for this purpose but with the additional benefit of providing another Harrogate railhead and station car parking currently not available at the stations between Knaresborough and Pannal inclusively. The only additional cost would be for the basic single platform and car parking area at Bilton. The Network Rail Capacity Director has shown an interest but needs convincing by support and lobbying from NYCC for this proposal.

Once this has been installed, there is the option to reinstate northwards towards the former Ripley station where a Park & Ride station adjacent to the A61 would be useful for commuters from Ripon and Nidderdale with two services an hour to Harrogate and Leeds without the need to use the A61 into and through Harrogate particularly in the peaks.

Construction of a Harrogate Western Relief road is being pushed hard by Harrogate Chamber and NYCC. In a recent edition of the Harrogate Advertiser, Executive County Councillor Don Mackenzie stated that this is the only option for traffic reduction in central Harrogate. However reinstatement of the Ripon-Harrogate railway line has not been considered as an option to reduce car congestion.

In 2004 as part of a Demand Forecast study, origin and destination traffic surveys were conducted along the A61 between the north end of Ripon bypass and Ripley. From this it was estimated that 144,000 car journeys annually along the A61 would convert to rail resulting in 144,000 less cars in central Harrogate of which 112,000 annually terminated



in Harrogate and wouldn't use a Western Relief road. Many journeys into Harrogate along the A61 were to access a railhead at either, Harrogate, Hornbeam Park, Pannal and even Weeton.

As these figures are now nearly thirteen years out of date, NYCC should insist on an up-to-date Demand Forecast on the A61 north of Harrogate to determine how much traffic in central Harrogate is through traffic and how much would convert to rail if the railway line to Ripon is reinstated before a decision is finally made to approve a new road.

Preparing a case for a £90m Harrogate Western Relief road has been estimated to cost NYCC £0.5m in a recent press release, yet only in 2015 I was refused £18,000 towards a feasibility study into reinstating a railway line through Ripon on the grounds of austerity cutbacks.

I am asking for your support once again to fund a benefit/cost analysis for reinstating the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line before Network Rails Route studies stakeholder consultations ends in June 2017.”

The Chairman then invited Andrew Bainbridge to speak.

Andrew Bainbridge said that he wished to explain the County Council's position in relation to both policy and practice of railway reinstatement. In the current Local Transport Plan, the County Council's strategy was to work with the rail industry on railway reinstatement where the rail industry believed proposals were of strategic value. At present the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line did not meet that criterion. The County Council adopted a common approach whereby it would only commit funding where there was clear potential for funding streams to deliver schemes; it could not commit to speculative proposals. In relation to the Harrogate Relief Road, there were clear funding streams available to progress the scheme through the Local Growth Fund. As things stood at present there were no funding streams available to reinstate the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line. The cost would likely be in excess of £300 million, which was beyond what the County Council or Local Growth Fund could finance. He said that his view on the way forward was not to commit the County Council at this stage to fund a study but to seek an opportunity for County Council officers to meet with Network Rail to discuss the future options for rail and to establish if industry agreement could be reached in principle to the reinstatement of the line.

Members made the following key points:

- Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie said that whilst he was sympathetic to the proposal and would like to see a rail connection between Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton, the reality was the hurdles to overcome in reinstating the line, including the amount of expenditure required, were considerable. This included the fact that Ripon currently did not have a train station and there was not agreement from the rail industry to reinstate the line. The request for funding the feasibility study had been considered by BES Executive Members in June 2015 but a decision had been put on hold in order to get a better understanding of where such a proposal rated in importance relative to other transport initiatives before a decision was made. Subsequently it had become known that Network Rail was considering opportunities for a diversionary route between York and Newcastle so might in due course fund its own feasibility study. Consequently he did not feel that it would be prudent for the County Council to fund a feasibility study that might be funded by Network Rail. Funding priorities at this point in time for the County Council needed to

relate to modernising the existing rail network.

- A Member said that he had previously not supported the Committee's in principle support to reinstate the Leeds-Wetherby-Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton Railway Line, and he remained of this view. He said that the proposal was unrealistic with significant sections of the original route now used for other purposes including housing. The track bed had been removed and some bridges had been demolished. Dr Adrian Morgan said that in relation to the recently reinstated Edinburgh to Galashiels line the trackbed had been in a similar state to the trackbed of the former Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line. Trackbed surveys had already been undertaken and account had been taken of development that had occurred since the line had closed in relation to the proposed reinstated route of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line.
- A Member asked if funding for the feasibility study had been sought from Harrogate Borough Council, parish and town councils and the YNYER Local Enterprise Partnership. Dr. Adrian Morgan replied that Ripon City Council was prepared to provide match-funding. He had written to Harrogate Borough Council a number of times but had not received a reply. He had not written to Hambleton District Council but Hambleton District Council had given route protection on the stretch from Northallerton to Ripon many years ago.
- A Member said that it was important to look at the broader picture. He referred to the housing projections for Harrogate district up to 2035 with Ripon projected to see a large increase, which would in turn see a significant rise in road traffic. He said that he would like to see the Committee reaffirming its support in principle to the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line.
- A Member asked how the proposal for the funding of the feasibility study for the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line compared with other schemes such as the Skipton East Lancs Rail Action Partnership (SELRAP). Andrew Bainbridge said that the rail industry was interested in reinstating the Skipton to Colne railway line. The scheme was in early stages. Lancashire County Council and North Yorkshire County Council were producing a corridor study on the economic benefits of the railway. The opportunity had arisen over the course of the last 12 months and the local authorities had been working with Network Rail for the past 18 months. Lancashire County Council was leading on the project and no funding had been committed by North Yorkshire County Council.
- A Member said that there was clear logic in transportation terms to reinstate the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line but he acknowledged the comments made by Andrew Bainbridge about needing to ensure that the rail industry was on board. It was illogical without the commitment of the rail industry to commit funding towards the project. He suggested that the proposal for a meeting to be held with the rail industry be arranged. Dr. Adrian Morgan replied that Ripon Town Council would welcome a meeting with the County Council and Network Rail. He said that a feasibility study would still need to be undertaken in order to provide an up-to-date benefit-cost ratio, necessary in order for the rail industry to commit to supporting the scheme.

The Chairman summed up the discussion. He noted that the majority of Members on the Committee had previously given their support to the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line. However, it had since become known that Network Rail was considering opportunities for a diversionary route between York and Newcastle. It had also become clear that without rail industry agreement there would

be no chance that the scheme would progress. He noted the proposal for the County Council, alongside other relevant local partners, to meet with Network Rail to discuss future options and to establish if rail industry agreement could be secured for reinstatement of the line. He said that in his view any subsequent funding for the feasibility study should not rest wholly on the shoulders of the County Council but should include contributions from Ripon City Council, Harrogate Borough Council, Hambleton District Council and ideally from the rail industry.

The Chairman put forward the following recommendations:

- a) That the Committee continues to support in principle the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line.

*A vote was taken and, on a show of hands, the recommendation was declared carried, with two against and no abstentions.*

- b) That North Yorkshire County Council with other relevant local partners meets with Network Rail to discuss future options and to establish if rail industry agreement could be secured for reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton line.

*A vote was taken and, on a show of hands, the recommendation was declared carried, with two abstentions and none against.*

#### **Resolved -**

- a) That the Committee continues to support in principle the reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton railway line.

- b) That North Yorkshire County Council with other relevant local partners meets with Network Rail to discuss future options and to establish if rail industry agreement could be secured for reinstatement of the Harrogate-Ripon-Northallerton line.

#### **116. Overview of the work being led by YNYER LEP to understand the potential impact and proposed solutions for agriculture and the wider rural economy pending exit from the EU**

Considered -

The oral report of Y&NYER Local Enterprise Partnership (Rural Secretariat)

David Smurthwaite presented the report. He explained about the work being led by the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP to understand the potential impact and proposed solutions for agriculture and the wider rural economy pending the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. Consultees on this piece of work included farmers, the National Farmers Union, DEFRA, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and Nidderdale AONB. Issues being looked at related to:

Stronger Dynamic Rural Growth:

- The development of a higher value economy driven by a successful agri-tech sector and also through support for the county's growing market towns. This included agri-food, bio-renewables and bioscience.
- Investment in broadband and mobile connectivity for growth in rural areas.
- Ensuring appropriate levels of immigration into rural areas would remain for the benefit of the hospitality and tourism industry and also key agricultural sectors such as horticulture.

- Market towns as the key driver of the rural economy providing housing, jobs, education and leisure for a large rural hinterland. The approach through the Common Agricultural Policy focused on individual farms and was designed specifically not to support market towns. By placing a greater focus on the economic development of market towns greater prosperity over a wide rural area would be possible.
- The long term purpose of the uplands. The piecemeal nature of support for rural areas without any overall direction did not allow for the development of infrastructure that supported the wider economy.

#### Greater Environment for All:

- Maintaining the rural landscape and centres of tourism in the county. The Common Agricultural Policy and in particular the agri-environment payments have been designed to maintain this landscape although there could be ways in which this could be improved. It is important that some type of payments to support marginal farming continues otherwise the uplands will revert to wilderness or that a ranging style of farming will be introduced. This is not what the many tourists who come to the uplands expect.
- Overhauling the current system of funding which is regarded as complex, unpredictable, inconsistent and bureaucratic. A move to payment by results for agri-environmental schemes would allow the better targeting of resources and also control of the outputs such as flood prevention and tourism support.

#### Greater Productivity and Strong Farm Businesses:

- Reaching a balance between higher productivity and the environment. In recent years the level of production in hill farms has moved from too many stock and overgrazing to a position of too few stock and shift to wilderness.
- Linking bio tech research and wider best practice to enable a focus on farm modernisation including genetics in all sectors.
- Having a grant regime in place that focuses on measures to improve productivity along the supply chain from the farm to the food manufacturers.
- Working with the Government to explore how tax regimes and planning laws could be amended to encourage growth in productivity.
- Providing farmers with professional business advice and a business plan led approach, moving towards a single point of contact to cut costs throughout the system and reduce confusion. This is a possible area for discussion through the devolution process.
- Investment in collaboration such as farmer's networks to spread knowledge and reduce costs.
- Producing a new model to support the business and not reward non farming landowners. The structure of the Common Agricultural Policy has had the unintended consequence of raising the value of agricultural land and also rents. This has resulted in the cost to new entrants entering farming is too high and tenant farmers increasingly uneconomical.
- Maintaining the benefits of the Protected Designation of Origin and similar schemes. Although the benefit can be highly focused, where it is applicable it can have a significant impact to support the agricultural sector such as the protection of the Wensleydale cheese name.

#### Lighter Bureaucracy:

- Decisions of schemes and funding have been taken too far from the point of impact to know about the circumstances or how the intervention fits with over organisations activities. A simpler, local scheme such as the sustainable development fund could be adapted to allow a straight forward approach that meets an area's needs. There is also an opportunity to look at the wider costs related to farm including animal registration. Alternative approaches such as

building on the farm assured scheme so that an audit approach may be as effective but lead to simpler and cost effective process.

Members made the following key points:

- A Member said that some of the greatest challenges in the last 40 to 60 years were now facing the economy of North Yorkshire. Devolution, austerity and the downturn in global trade posed uncertainties that affected all businesses. However there were opportunities to be grasped as well. He said that he had concerns about how the evolving 'Brexit' negotiations and devolution would impact on the economy across the whole of North Yorkshire. He noted the work that the YNYER LEP was doing with regards to upland farming but said that of equal concern was the impact upon the economies of market towns and coastal areas. He suggested that the Committee convened a steering group to have a watching brief on the broader impacts for the economy, taking soundings after Article 50 had been triggered.
- A Member noted that it was of concern that it was not clear at present where the compensatory route would be when EU subsidies for agriculture and for other industries were withdrawn.
- A Member said that he supported the idea of the Committee having a watching brief on Brexit but market forces would largely dictate the success or otherwise of the economy. Big business had had a vested interest in remaining within the EU but it was important now following the vote that the best of the situation was made and that scaremongering was avoided. Key issues were around the export of goods and the overall competitiveness of businesses in North Yorkshire to take on new trading opportunities for example with China.
- A Member asked if the YNYER LEP was conducting work on the wider impacts of the economy in relation to 'Brexit'. David Smurthwaite replied that it was not specifically but was continuing to focus upon the five strands in its Strategic Economic Plan. These remained relevant moving forward as they centred upon achieving economic growth and improving productivity.

#### **Resolved -**

- a) That the oral report of the work being led by YNYER LEP to understand the potential impact and proposed solutions for agriculture and the wider rural economy pending exit from the EU be noted.
- b) That the Committee convenes a steering group composed of the Committee's Group Spokespersons to have a watching brief on the broader impacts for the economy after Article 50 has been triggered, and that meetings be held following the County Council elections in May 2017.

#### **117. Report on the Operational Review of Public Rights of Way**

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services providing an overview of progress on a comprehensive review of the Public Rights of Way Service (PROW) following a restructure carried out in 2015.

Ian Kelly presented the report. He referred to section 2 of the report providing the background to the review. The driver for change had been the requirement to make savings to the staffing and maintenance budget for the Public Rights of Way (PROW) service. The County Council's statutory responsibilities with regards to PROW were guiding the review.

Referring to section 3 and section 4 of the report, Ian Kelly explained about the various workstreams and objectives of the review, and the timetable of the review.

Ian Kelly referred to section 5 of the report, explaining the proposal to introduce route categorisation – prioritising routes making up the PROW network. He said that the proposed approach was seen as meeting the County Council's statutory duties in an efficient and appropriate manner with the resources available. In the past there had been an inconsistent approach across the county where a lack of transparent and comprehensive prioritisation had led to a 'he who shouts loudest approach'. The new model once agreed would present a more realistic spread of high, medium and low category paths. He referred to the overview of the proposed approach to route categorisation. He explained the difficulty of measuring community value, even though community value was important. Consequently the proposal was to initially assign a route score and category based solely on the key characteristic of the route.

Ian Kelly went on to refer to section 6 of the report relating to the review of procedures in particular to the common themes and to section 7 of the report relating to Third Party Volunteers. The review of procedures included greater use of community countryside volunteers and ensuring that work was undertaken at the appropriate level within the PROW team. Another theme related to asking landowners to take on more responsibility and moving towards enforcement action more quickly within the procedures. He explained that in respect of third party volunteers the PROW service was working with Lower Wharfedale Ramblers to develop a pilot project as detailed in paragraph 7.1. The hope was that the service could engage with other groups around the county that had also expressed an interest in proactively maintaining the network.

Members made the following key points:

- A Member asked who was responsible for cutting the grass on footpaths, noting that in rural areas especially footpaths were becoming narrower due to the vegetation not being cut back. Ian Kelly confirmed that overhanging vegetation on to a PROW was the responsibility of the landowner to cut back. Any growth on a PROW itself was the responsibility of the County Council to clear.
- A Member noted that it was a tremendous challenge for the County Council with its limited resources and funding to be responsible for all PROWs outside of the National Park Authority areas. He referred to paragraph 5.3 of the report setting out the statutory duty on the local authority to 'maintain' PROW. He sought clarification as to whether the proposed approach of route categorisation would ensure that the County Council was still reasonably complying with its statutory duty. Ian Kelly said that he was confident that the County Council would still be complying with its statutory duty. The reality was that the proposed changes to the service were necessary in light of efficiencies needing to be made.
- A Member noted that most PROWs in urban areas were kept clear because they were regularly used. When it came to rural areas this was less so. He asked how enforcement would be taken against landowners who were not complying with their duties. Ian Kelly said that in the first instance it was

through educating landowners on their responsibilities. The County Council's website contained information setting out landowners responsibilities in respect of PROW. The County Council had not prosecuted a landowner for a number of years and wherever possible tried to ensure a lot of negotiation was done before moving on to the prosecution stage. However in future less time could be spent on going back and forth numerous times before taking action or requiring landowners to undertake necessary works.

- A Member said that the overall impression was that the review appeared to be quite bureaucratic. He said that he would have liked to have seen more information on the definition of route categorisation to be used. It would be difficult to define 'local community' and in this regard parish councils were not always best placed to act as consultees on PROW proposals as they might not have clear knowledge about PROWs in their area. Also the network users listed in paragraph 5.12 of the report were sometimes unrepresentative of the views of the local community.
- A Member noted that from the experience in his local area some PROWs were well-used whilst others had become lost. There were often a range of different and sometimes conflicting interests within a community. The proposed approach in the report went a long way to ensuring a standardised approach and he supported this.
- A Member said that he supported the scope of the review, commenting that it was well-thought out and comprehensive in its nature.
- A Member said that he had received a letter from a resident in his division about a number of PROW issues on the 'Minster to Minster Marathon' from Ripon to York, primarily following the River Ure/River Ouse route. The main issues appeared to be general neglect of PROWs and overgrowth not being cut back including giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam, with complaints about other sections not being passable. The Member asked for the route to be checked and asked if the County Council had received the letter. Ian Kelly said that the letter will have been logged and would report back to the Member on the issues in the letter.

**Resolved -**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Committee supports the proposed approach to route categorisation and the review of working procedures set out in the report.

**118. Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Development Officer inviting the Committee to:-

- (a) Note the information in the report.
- (b) Confirm, amend or add to the areas of work shown on the Work Programme schedule (attached as Appendix A to the report).

**Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 1.16pm

JS