

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 MAY 2022

THIS STATEMENT COVERS THE PERIOD FROM THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022 TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS ON 5 MAY 2022

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

Highways

The County Council's latest trading company, NY Highways, which began operations in June 2021, has continued to deliver services throughout the year despite staffing issues caused by national shortages and Covid-19 restrictions. Innovative methods, like spray injection patching, have been implemented in order to encourage safe and efficient ways of delivering services. During 2021/22 NY Highways delivered most of the capital programme through a framework contract, which has ensured certainty of delivery and excellent value for money.

Tour of Britain

The Tour of Britain Cycle Race will arrive in North Yorkshire on 7 September. Officers are working closely with colleagues in Scarborough, Hambleton and Ryedale as well as with other key partners. The fourth stage of the race will finish in Helmsley, after passing through Whitby, Robin Hood's Bay, the Esk Valley, Great Ayton, Stokesley and a challenging climb up Carlton Bank. The impact on our road network will be similar to those experienced during earlier Tours de Yorkshire, with rolling road closures typically lasting less than 45 minutes. The race will be broadcast live on ITV4 and will be screened across the world.

Levelling Up Fund

The Government's Levelling-Up Fund, first announced in March 2021, aims to provide investment in infrastructure improvements, which can be shown to make a positive difference in local communities. It prioritises funding in those places where it can make the biggest impact to everyday life, including in former industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal areas.

The County Council is drawing up a transport bid focused on access improvements at three railway stations: Thirsk, Seamer and Scarborough. This rail package is considered best suited to meet the Fund's objectives. In addition to leading on this bid, we are also supporting a bid by Ryedale District Council for Malton Station, as well as bids being developed by Scarborough and Richmondshire Councils.

Major Schemes

The County Council's Junction 47 scheme was completed on 26 April. This project at the intersection of the A1M and A59 included the widening of the A59 and motorway slip roads, traffic light controls on the roundabout and at the upgraded junction with the A168. The project delivers much improved traffic management and enhanced safety in readiness for planned residential and commercial development in the area.

This scheme did face considerable challenges: unforeseen ground conditions, interrupted supply chains, ecological mitigation and Covid-19.

Our largest capital project currently in development is the re-alignment of the A59 at Kex Gill. This scheme has a budget of £61m. It is expected that statutory processes including land acquisition and the side roads order will be concluded this summer. A contractor for the works is set to be appointed in the autumn with a start date of early 2023.

Transforming Cities Fund

Development of the three Station Gateway Projects in Harrogate, Selby and Skipton valued at £42m continues at pace. A national Tier 1 level contractor, Galliford Try, has been commissioned under an Early Contractor Involvement basis to provide advice on the construction programme. At the same time, land acquisition arrangements and planning applications are being undertaken.

Buses

The County Council's £8m bid to the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) fund was successful. Work to accept the grant and to finalise the agreement between the Council and Harrogate Bus Company is underway. Together with a contribution of almost £12m from the bus operator, the project will convert the whole fleet of 20 single-deck and 19 double-deck buses to battery electric operation.

This excellent news was tempered by the announcement a few days later that our Bus Services Improvement Plan bid, valued at £116m over eight years, had been unsuccessful. The Government's Bus Back Better fund was greatly over-subscribed and county councils throughout the country received no funding in this round of allocations.

Digital

Phase 3 of the County Council's SFNY project has been completed. This £20.5m broadband expansion contract, awarded in 2018, connected up 14,554 premises (in excess of its original contract number of 14,239), about 85% of which were by means of fibre to the property, providing average download speeds of at least 300 mbps. Phase 4 is currently underway and, when complete, will take coverage of superfast broadband to 97% of all households and businesses in North Yorkshire.

In the last 10 years the County Council, supported by its broadband company NYnet, has invested more than £100m in the county's digital infrastructure. In addition to the SFNY programme, achievements include the installation of a £15m Local Full Fibre Network connecting up 340 public buildings, a partnership in Mobile Access North Yorkshire and its £6m project piloting the benefits of 5G connectivity, free public Wi-Fi rolled out in 20 of our towns and Internet of Things gateways in almost 100 locations.

I submit this, my final Statement, as I approach the end of my term as elected member. I wish the new council and each individual member every success during the next five exciting years and beyond. The Access portfolio, handed to me by the leader, Cllr Carl Les, in May 2015, has provided opportunities and challenges aplenty. I have loved every minute. I send best wishes to my successor.

I take this final opportunity to pay tribute to all our highly professional officers who have helped and guided me during my time as councillor, and whose invaluable support has been unfailing and hugely appreciated. My sincere thanks to you all.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DON MACKENZIE