

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 NOVEMBER 2022

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Positive news

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund

North Yorkshire has successfully secured £2m as part of a pilot testing the government's new Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund. Our bid focuses on delivering charging solutions that are aesthetically sympathetic in deeply rural areas where electricity grid upgrades would otherwise be prohibitive. We plan to deliver 70 chargers in locations in all corners of the county and will announce further details shortly. What we are able to achieve here in North Yorkshire will help inform what happens elsewhere in the country, and is a key step to realising our broader ambition to deliver 1,529 charging points across the county by 2030. In total, 3969 chargers need to be delivered but it is expected that the private sector will deliver around half of the requirement.

A59 Kex Gill

We are making progress with the essential realignment of Kex Gill, which is amongst the council's biggest ever infrastructure projects. The council has awarded preferred bidder status to John Sisk & Son (Holdings) Ltd, a family-owned international civil engineering and construction contractor which has a strong track record. We are in the final stages of completing land processes ahead a decision on our full business case which was submitted to the Department for Transport on 2 August, with a decision expected very soon and a planned start on site at the turn of the year.

West of Harrogate developments

The County Council is working closely with Harrogate Borough Council to ensure a cohesive approach to delivery of the infrastructure required from planned development in the West of Harrogate, which will see an extra 2,500 homes constructed between now and 2035. This development is spread over several sites and a number of separate planning applications, but a unified approach is being taken to delivery of essential infrastructure, including two new schools, employment land and health facilities.

We are working with the land promoters and their consultants, who have been preparing a cumulative transport study. As part of the planning application process, promoters must also produce Travel Plans as part of the pre-application process to show complete commitment to promoting sustainable travel.

Transforming Cities Fund – Harrogate, Selby and Skipton

We continue to make progress on work to improve access to three of North Yorkshire's rail stations, utilising up to £38.3m of funding from the government's Transforming Cities Fund.

In Harrogate, we have now concluded our third public consultation, and analysis of the results – some 5,000 individual comments - will soon be completed and published. Two planning applications relating to the scheme have been submitted, and we will soon consult on the scheme's Traffic Regulation orders, before the Executive is asked to consider whether to submit a full business case to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Planning permission for the Selby scheme was granted in September. We are currently developing a construction methodology for the project, and are working closely with Network Rail and TransPennine Express to deliver key parts of the scheme involving railway land, including new lifts as part of the Access for All scheme. We are preparing to commence demolition of the Selby Railway Sports & Social Club on Station Road and James William

House on Cowie Drive in the New Year. Full information will be provided well in advance of any work starting on site.

In Skipton, a planning application for the railway car park has been submitted with determination expected in November. We continue to work with Network Rail, Northern and the Canal and River Trust on design finalisation.

The impact of inflation is being considered on all three projects. Should a need to reduce costs materialise we will prioritise quality of materials, which could result in some elements being de-scoped. Once designs are finalised, full business cases will be prepared and submitted to WYCA for final approval. As a result of survey works and important engagement with partners and the public, construction expected to start later in 2023.

Key issues

Ready for winter

The council is once again gearing up for winter, in partnership with our Teckal company NY Highways. Our summer restock of salt barns and replenishment of salt bins/heaps along key routes and in communities is complete. We have some 55,000 tonnes of salt to start the season and we can also call upon further strategic salt reserves if necessary. Our gritters have all been serviced, as has equipment used by the 100+ farming contractors who provide invaluable support to us in more extreme weather events.

We are proud of the winter service we deliver, which keeps the county moving. Despite the deeply rural nature of the county, our service is one of the most comprehensive in the country, with 52% or 4,800km of the highway network treated in a typical season – a distance equivalent to Northallerton to Belgrade. As in previous years, we stand ready to respond to whatever this winter may send our way.

Supporting bus services

Now is a critical period for North Yorkshire's bus services, with a third of the county's network at risk of potential service reduction or withdrawal. This is an unprecedented situation, with services under significant pressure from the combined effects of reduced passenger numbers, increasing costs and staff shortages. These pressures are not unique to North Yorkshire, but are made all the more acute by the rural nature of our county.

The council has been successful in lobbying Government for extra financial support, and we welcome the decision to extend Covid funding until March. But we accept this support will not continue in perpetuity, and the council's £1.6m of subsidy cannot meet the scale of the challenge we're now facing either.

We have already seen two routes withdrawn – in the Selby and Harrogate areas - and the unfortunate expectation is that others may follow unless usage improves. We are working closely with operators to share information and encourage passengers to use services via the new Enhanced Partnership, which met for the first time in September. Working together, we will be in the best place to promote and protect services for our communities.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR KEANE DUNCAN