

North Yorkshire County Council

Business and Environmental Services

Executive Member for Highways and Transportation

10 February 2023

**Update on Developing a New Local Transport Plan
for North Yorkshire and Request to Consult**

Report of the Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation

1.0 Purpose Of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services (BES) and the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation on the development of the new Local Transport Plan; and
- 1.2 to seek permission to run an initial public and stakeholder engagement.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 North Yorkshire's current Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been in place since 2016. Whilst the plan had a longer-term strategic horizon to 2040, it is considered good practice to update LTPs regularly and to provide delivery plans for a period of five years or fewer.
- 2.2 The Department for Transport (DfT) is currently developing new guidance for LTPs and also for a linked plan setting out our plans for Quantified Carbon Reduction. It was expected that this would be received in late 2022, but due to the changes in government, this has been delayed. It is now expected that the guidance will be received in Spring 2023. The DfT has advised that they are considering the impact of this 'revised timeline' on the delivery and implementation of new LTPs.
- 2.3 During the time since the last LTP was written, electric vehicles use has grown and in 2020 the government announced that the sale of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles will be banned from 2030. In addition, the Covid 19 pandemic has impacted significantly on how people live, work and travel, and there have been advances in policy and transport technology, all of which are not reflected in the current LTP.
- 2.4 Further, the County Council itself is moving towards local government reorganisation (LGR) and on 1 April of this year will become a unitary authority, North Yorkshire Council, bringing together the North Yorkshire District, Borough and County Councils. In the Autumn of 2023, North Yorkshire is set to become part of the proposed Combined Authority for York and North Yorkshire. Under this arrangement, a Combined Authority will be created, with a Mayor for the region elected in May 2024. The Combined Authority working with the constituent councils will become responsible for the control of a Key Route Network, which is yet to be defined, and a new Strategic Transport Plan both of which are being developed by NYCC officers working jointly with City of York. The individual local authorities will outline their own transport priorities, which will be expressed in Local Delivery Plans, covering each unitary authority area. Again, the current LTP does not reflect this local government model.

2.5 In view of the above, officers have recommended that a complete redevelopment of the LTP is undertaken.

3.0 Progress to date

3.1 Officers have started work on preparing a project timeline, to meet the DfT's earlier suggested deadline of having a new LTP in place by the end of this parliament (December 2024). As noted above, the DfT has said that they are reconsidering timelines for implementation in view of the delayed publication of the LTP guidance, but officers will work to the existing timetable which is linked to Devolution and requires an LTP to be ready by April 2024. Whilst the LTP guidance has not been published, this does mean that there is a risk that some work may be abortive. However, in view of the extensive work required to develop an LTP, it is recommended that work starts on developing the LTP as early as possible, in order to meet the DfT's currently published timescales and also to ensure that we have a new LTP in place for the planned Mayoral Combined Authority being in place.

3.2 Draft guidance has not as yet been issued by the DfT, however, information on the LTP (via webinars and newsletters) from DfT civil servants, has set out expectations that the new LTP will be presented in a different format to previous iterations, taking a form similar to a five-case model business case. In addition, the LTP must be vision-led and place focussed, with local planning authorities playing a key strategic role in the development of the plan.

3.3 NYCC and City of York Council (CYC) are progressing with plans for policy integration following the devolution deal announcement. Officers from transport planning are meeting weekly with colleagues from CYC to ensure that both authorities' LTPs are prepared in a complementary manner.

3.4 In addition to this, NYCC and CYC are considering how data gathering and analysis can be undertaken in a way which is consistent, and which makes best use of both authorities' resources. It is hoped that some of the data baselining work, which is expected to start soon, will be commissioned jointly by the two authorities, to take advantage of economies of scale.

4.0 Approach to consultation and engagement

4.1 NYCC officers from transport planning, with whom the responsibility for writing the plan sits, have begun working with colleagues in Corporate Communications to devise a strategy and delivery plan for the extensive consultation that the DfT will expect as part of the development of the new LTP.

4.2 As set out above, in order to move the project forward in a way which meets the DfT's timescales, and expectations in terms of public and stakeholder input, early engagement must be a key feature of the LTP development programme, and should continue throughout the process. It is expected that key stakeholders play a significant role in plan formation and scrutiny, with dialogue being two-way throughout the process.

4.3 It has been noted that, in view of the many recent engagement exercises that have taken place associated with LGR and devolution, there is a risk of 'consultation fatigue' (meaning that people become tired of responding to consultations). However, as part of the ongoing work that the authority have conducted due to LGR and Devolution, an initial data gathering exercise relating to transport could be run under the 'Let's talk' brand, which has been used recently for several engagement

exercises and has become a recognised approach. This will help to make engagement on transport part of a continuing conversation, rather than another new and separate consultation.

5.0 Reason for consultation

- 5.1 Whilst final draft guidance has not been published by the DfT, NYCC was asked as part of small group of authorities, to confidentially comment on the DfT's latest draft guidance.
- 5.2 This draft guidance, whilst clearly subject to change, gave a broad indication of the approach that the DfT wish to see authorities use in developing their LTP.
- 5.3 It set out that engagement at all levels is a fundamental requirement of, and moreover should be an ongoing process throughout, the plan development, with a wide range of stakeholders involved in forming the direction of the LTP.
- 5.4 In order to determine the initial direction of the LTP, it is appropriate and expected by the DfT that stakeholders and the public are asked their opinions on the strategic direction of the plan. This question will be asked in the context of emerging guidance from the DfT, which suggests that headline policy objectives are likely to relate to sustainable economic growth, improving transport for the user (safe, reliable, inclusive), and reducing environmental impacts.
- 5.5 Whilst there will be an expectation on authorities that in developing their LTPs they focus on the national strategic priorities as set out above, there will also be opportunity at a local level for consideration of how those objectives might be achieved and the types of approaches that are suited to the particular local authority context.
- 5.6 As the plan moves forward in development, there will be a need for further engagement, before the LTP is ultimately adopted.

6.0 Approach to consultation and engagement

- 6.1 DfT draft guidance suggests that an initial round of engagement undertaken at the start of the process should allow consideration of the government's policy objectives, but also to allow questions around future visioning to be asked. In order to do this though, a degree of contextual information must be provided. This needs to set out what the LTP is, conversely, what it isn't, and why it matters. Providing this information in a way that is engaging, useful, but also succinct and manageable will be key.
- 6.2 In addition to initial public engagement, it is also important that stakeholder engagement is undertaken. Stakeholders in the LTP will take a variety of forms; there will be inter departmental stakeholders, statutory stakeholders, and also stakeholders from groups, or organisations, or possibly even individuals who should be involved in the development of the LTP.
- 6.3 Officers from Transport Planning and Communications have been meeting regularly in preparation for the engagement that will be necessary for the plan. It is recommended that the initial engagement for the LTP is undertaken on the Commonplace platform, which has been used effectively as part of the LGR, and devolution projects. It is suggested that the engagement for the LTP is set under the 'Let's Talk' banner, as Let's Talk Transport.

- 6.4 As part of the Let's Talk series of engagement, some data and comments related to transport has already been collected. Some of that data will be of relevance to the LTP, and will, where appropriate, form part of the initial data gathering exercise.
- 6.5 The initial data gathering exercise will be very much focussed on trying to establish what should form the high-level strategic priorities for the LTP. In addition to understanding people's current concerns, it's also important to ask about views on the future and their vision. Once this data has been gathered it will help to form the strategic focus of the LTP.
- 6.6 The DfT has said that it expects that all new LTPs will be vision led; that is that the LTP sets out a strategic aim of what objectives should be achieved. The vision will then set the course for the approaches that are taken to achieve the objectives. This differs very much from the predict and provide approach that has historically been used in transport planning. To this end, the initial visioning approach will ask people to think about what their vision for the future is, and how they think that should be delivered.
- 6.7 One of the ways in which the engagement will try to establish prioritisation of spend and focus, is by asking a hypothetical budgeting question. This is likely to take the approach of the respondent being asked how they might choose to allocate spending from a theoretical budget of £100. A range of options will be available for options available could include buses, active travel, travel education, improved ticketing and information products, road safety, support for future mobility initiatives, EV changing points etc, network maintenance or building new roads.
- 6.8 Advice from the Communications unit is that particularly when asking for value judgements, and in the questions around visioning scenarios, use of 'feelings' as a barometer of opinion has proved particularly useful and effective.
- 6.9 The DfT is clear that engagement with harder to reach groups is an essential part of the approach for LTP development. Whilst a key part of the LTP engagement will be the use of the online Commonplace platform, it is important that alternative methods, including traditional paper-based surveys are available for those people who do not have internet access. Easy read, translated and young person's versions will also be provided.
- 6.10 Furthermore, to target people who might not normally engage, we plan to have staff in person at local, existing events such as markets, local meeting places such as shopping centres, leisure centres and points of interest. It has been recommended that these events are staffed by existing officers with support from colleagues service wide, where possible.
- 6.11 It is likely that this engagement will take place towards the end of the financial year. In advance of public consultation, there will need to be engagement and briefing of all elected Members, and also relevant colleagues. It is proposed that this will take place in early March 2023.

7.0 Second stage consultation

- 7.1 Further to the initial engagement, there will be a further requirement for engagement and consultation as the plan progresses. The form that this will take is yet to be determined, but it is likely that there will be stakeholder engagement through the development of the plan, and then a public consultation on the draft LTP once it has been fully developed. It is likely that the consultation at that stage will be used to

refine the plan, which will have been developed based on the vision and objectives developed as a consequence of the early-stage engagement. It is also planned that this will be co-ordinated with activities carried out by City of York Council as part of ensuring strategic alignment of the documents being developed by the two councils.

8.0 Equalities

8.1 There are no equalities issues arising as a direct consequence of this report. However, as noted above, it will be a priority objective of the engagement for the LTP to ensure that we collect data which is representative of the population of north Yorkshire, and that traditionally seldom heard groups are supported in participation (see Appendix A).

9.0 Finance

9.1 A budget is set aside for the development of the LTP which is a statutory responsibility of the council. In addition to the council's own funds, the DfT has issued a grant to authorities for development of their LTP which will be used to fund the necessary engagement. On 21 March 2022 the DfT notified Local Transport Authorities (LTA) of their revenue funding allocations for 2021/22 under the new Local Authority Capacity Fund with NYCC receiving an allocation of £178,571.43. The grant was provided primarily for the preparation for the launch of the new LTP guidance and to encourage LTAs to update their LTPs in line with guidance by the end of this parliament. While the grant was allocated in the financial year 2021/22, NYCC was not required to spend the money in that timeframe making it possible to align spend with the development of our LTP with the majority of costs being incurred in 2023/24.

10.0 Legal

10.1 There are no legal implications as a consequence of this report.

11.0 Climate Change

11.1 There are no climate change issues arising as a direct consequence of this report. However, climate change and decarbonisation will form a key part of the new LTP, with a quantified carbon reduction plan being developed alongside the LTP document. Climate change and environmental protection are one of the government's three key objectives for new LTPs, so there will be further detailed work on carbon as the plan progresses (see Appendix B).

12.0 Recommendation(s)

12.1 It is recommended the Corporate Director, BES, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation:

- a) notes this update report; and
- b) approves the request to undertake consultation and engagement as part of the development of the new Local Transport Plan.

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Background Documents: None