

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

17 MAY 2023

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Highways Maintenance

Keeping North Yorkshire's roads safe and in the best possible condition is a key priority for the new council. This is an immense challenge, but despite the impact of winter and inflationary pressures we are making positive progress.

We commenced our annual surface dressing programme within days of the new council's launch. Careful prioritisation of works, additional investment and close cooperation with our contractors means this year's £8 million programme includes an extra £2.6m worth of works, the equivalent of an extra 60 miles. Subject to weather conditions the programme will be completed by mid-June.

Our efforts have been further buoyed by North Yorkshire being awarded an extra £6.5m for road repairs by Chancellor Jeremy Hunt. This investment is very welcome and allow us to deliver even more schemes across the county in 2023/24. We are currently finalising the annual programme before we share a list of locations with councillors and the public.

Investment is just one part of our plan. Innovation is just as critical. A countywide programme of spray injection patching works has also commenced in the Ryedale area. This pothole repair technique, which delivers high-quality and value-for-money repairs, builds on trials which were carried out last summer.

A59 Kex Gill

We are almost ready to begin construction work to realign Kex Gill which is amongst the council's biggest ever infrastructure projects. Our Full Business Case was approved by Department for Transport (DfT) in February, unlocking the £56.1m grant. The Council awarded preferred bidder status to John Sisk & Son (Holdings) Ltd, a family-owned international contractor with a strong track record. The full contract award is pending at the time of writing, with works programmed to commence at the end of this month. Advance works on site such as tree and moorland clearance are continuing.

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 received key, cross-party support from local councillors via the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee. With localism at the heart of the new council, the Executive was keen to consult local councillors on this key investment. The Executive will meet on May 30 to decide whether to submit a Full Business Case to West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
- planning permission for the Selby scheme was granted in September. We are currently developing a construction plan for the project, working closely with Network Rail and TransPennine Express given key parts of the scheme involve 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, together with utility diversions related to the new Bawtry Road underpass. Detailed design for the highways element of the project is now complete and focus is switching to the station building;

- in Skipton, a planning application for the railway car park has been submitted, however, further details are being submitted to the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water before their objections can be lifted and application determined. We continue to work with Network Rail, Northern and the Canal and River Trust on design finalisation.

Subject to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority approving business cases for the three schemes, construction is expected to start in late 2023.

Levelling Up Fund (LUF) – Thirsk, Seamer, Scarborough and Malton stations

Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bids to improve Thirsk, Seamer, Scarborough and Malton rail stations were unfortunately unsuccessful. While this is disappointing news, we remain undeterred in our efforts to deliver these key transport improvements, which collectively have a value of almost £60m. Our plans are ready to go and we are seeking alternative funding, such as from the next LUF round or from devolution investment funds.

20mph Speed Review

The review of the 20mph speed limit policy is almost complete. Thank you to councillors for their valuable feedback. A report will soon be presented to the Executive with a series of recommendations hoping to strengthen our approach to speed management in North Yorkshire. Meanwhile, we are supporting North Yorkshire Police's review of speed enforcement. This is a police-led review, but it is right that councillors as elected representatives of North Yorkshire's communities can help shape this as part of the partnership approach.

Local Transport Plan

DfT has advised it expects all local transport authorities to have a new or reviewed local transport plan (LTP) in place by July 2024. A quantified carbon reduction plan will also be required to sit alongside the plan. Ahead of the mayoral election in May 2024, we are working with colleagues at City of York Council (CYC) to develop a new LTP for North Yorkshire and York. We have commenced consultation with the public and key stakeholders and this will continue throughout development of the plan. Councillors will play a key role in creating the LTP via a series of workshops.

Public Rights of Way

A celebration event took place earlier this month to mark the commencement of an additional 21 miles of England Coast Path between Filey Brigg and Bridlington North Sands. This is the final stretch of England Coast Path within North Yorkshire to open and forms part of a continuous walking route between Bamburgh and Bridlington North Sands, which is the longest opened part of the England Coast Path in the country to date. The Council has been working over the last few years to establish the route, which as well as utilising existing Public Rights of Way, has resulted in the creation of new routes along the coastline providing increased walking opportunities in the area.

Buses

We have just accepted the final extension to the Local Transport Fund grant from the DfT. This amounts to an additional £360k which will be used to support services. We hope this will allow current service levels to continue for at least a further year. This allows us time to conduct a wider review of the way the council supports services. However, increased passenger numbers, not subsidies, remain the key to the long-term viability of bus services. This effort has been supported by the national £2 fare cap initiative, which has been popular with passengers and has been extended to June 30. The Council is continuing to work closely through our Enhanced Partnership with operators to promote bus use, undertake increased marketing and consider infrastructure improvements.