

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

13 NOVEMBER 2024

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Buses

We're rolling out enhanced bus routes across North Yorkshire as part of our major £3.5m Bus Service Improvement Plan 3 (BSIP3) investment package. Several extra services, including evening and weekend journeys, are already running. More will follow in coming months. We've secured funding for one year only, so it is vital that the public get on board and support these services. In further positive news, bus stop and station repairs and improvements across Ripon, Harrogate and Scarborough will be undertaken this winter.

Our £1 fare cap for young people aged 18 and under is now live on most services in North Yorkshire. However, we will be forced to review the future of this initiative following the Government's decision to increase the national £2 fare cap to £3 from January 1. It is expected the fare cap will be scrapped altogether at the end of 2025, a move that will see fares increase, passengers inevitably deterred from choosing the bus and potential financial jeopardy once again for routes we've been fighting hard to protect.

We cannot underplay the phenomenal results the £2 cap has delivered in North Yorkshire. This is not just a discount for passengers, it's responsible for the very survival of routes. Buses are only on the road today because of it. Coupled with over £5m of grant funding, and close cooperation with operators, the cap has achieved a significant uplift in passenger numbers: 10% in 2023, and 14% so far in 2024. Every one of our 80 at-risk routes has been protected. We will now closely monitor the consequences of the fare hike and continue our efforts to support services.

Winter Maintenance

A few weeks ago, I visited Brompton on Swale depot to meet our gritting team and inspect machinery there. I can confirm they are ready to face whatever this winter throws at us, including the very worst of Dales weather. Our six other main depots, and five satellite depots, are also prepared for the season.

This year's fleet comprises 70 gritters in total, including 31 new replacements. Necessary pre-season checks and servicing having been undertaken during the summer period. Salt bins, grit bins and heaps have all been replenished. Duty rotas are in place. Our drivers, duty managers and, of course, our invaluable farming contractors, stand ready to keep North Yorkshire moving.

While this season is proving mild so far, we have already undertaken some winter service treatments this year, and our teams are prepared for colder, harsher weather to come. I will be joining the team at Brompton on Swale once again, later in the season, to head up into the Dales on some of the remotest priority routes.

A59 Kex Gill

Our largest-ever highways project is making positive progress on site. We remain on track to open the new road in Spring 2026. However, we cannot underestimate this project's scale. I visited the site with BBC Look North a few weeks ago, and they profiled the immense effort that is under way there. The scheme is taking place in some of the toughest, most unforgiving terrain in the county. It involves clearing 64,000m² of vegetation, excavating

370,000 m³ of material, constructing 12 new structures including walls, underpasses and culverts, and carefully handling our local badgers, otters, birds and fish.

The season's major earthworks operation has been delivered to programme. Delivery through to next spring will focus upon structural bridleway underpass, new culverts, the beck diversion and new drainage systems. As the works progress into the 2025 earthworks season, the below-ground works will have been completed, and focus will turn to the above-ground features such as new embankments.

Transforming Cities Fund – Harrogate, Selby and Skipton

The three projects are currently undergoing detailed pricing before final approval by grant-funding bodies West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the Department for Transport early in the New Year. It is now confirmed that NY Highways will deliver the Skipton project, while Galliford Try will focus upon the Selby and Harrogate projects, subject to a competitive bid. Works are expected to mobilise in the March 2025 period across all three projects to enable a substantive start in spring continuing to full construction throughout 2025.

Lane Rental

We are pursuing the toughest possible action under current legislation to control roadworks and mitigate the disruption they so often cause to motorists in North Yorkshire. Under our proposed Lane Rental Scheme, utility companies will be charged £2,500 per day to work on our busiest roads at peak times. Overrunning works will incur significant fines too.

We are making continued good progress with establishing the scheme, which would be the very first to be introduced by a local authority in the North of England. The 12-week statutory consultation process is now complete and the details are being collated.

The Government has very recently announced its continued support for these initiatives nationally. Most importantly, it has also offered a timetable for considering applications for their establishment. The Department for Transport has given an assurance that any submissions received between now and April 2025 - a deadline we will achieve - will all be considered between May 2025 and July 2025. This means that a Lane Rental Scheme could be running in North Yorkshire sometime between October 2025 and December 2025.

Parks and Grounds

Finally, I would like to welcome success in the recent, independent judging of our parks and open spaces. We've received five Green Flag awards and some 52 awards across the Yorkshire in Bloom results. Some highlights include:

- Green Flag awards for Pannett Park, Peasholm Park, Glen & Crescent Gardens, South Cliff Gardens, and Falsgrave Park – all in the Scarborough area
- the highest 'Platinum' award for In Bloom went to Valley Gardens (Harrogate), Knaresborough Castle, Spa Gardens (Ripon), while Friary Gardens (Richmond) achieved Silver Gilt, an excellent result

Well done to all involved in delivering these phenomenal results. As we move into the winter season, grass cutting has now ceased and operations now focus on hedge cutting, pruning, tree works and renovations, preparing the way for spring. The teams will also continue to support and prepare for the many events taking place across North Yorkshire's open spaces including bonfire, Remembrance and Christmas events.