

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

5 MAY 2021

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

NY Highways

The latest addition to the County Council's Brierley Group of Companies will take over the highways maintenance contract with effect from the beginning of next month. From 1 June there will be a three-day stand down period when all new employees of NY Highways will be inducted into the company in readiness for business as usual work to commence on 4 June. Sub-contractors will be used during this short period of induction to ensure no loss of service.

I look forward with confidence to the commencement of operations by our Teckal company. We assume direct control of this very high profile service at a time of constrained budgets, when it is more important than ever to provide the very best value for money for our taxpayers.

Street Lighting – LED conversion success

Our ambitious carbon reduction scheme to replace 50,400 street lights with low-energy LED lamps has been completed more quickly and at a dramatically lower cost than expected. Originally budgeted at up to £13m and programmed over five years, the conversion project was finished by our in-house street lighting team within three years, at a cost of just over £8m.

The new lighting saves us £1.285m a year in energy and maintenance costs, and gives a full return on our investment in under eight years. The project also represents the single largest factor up until now in helping the County Council to secure its ambition being of carbon neutral by 2030.

Our street lighting engineers continue to work with and advise town and parish councils and the two national park authorities in efforts to convert their lighting to LED.

Active Travel Fund schemes

During recent months residents of Harrogate, Knaresborough and Whitby have been engaged in two rounds of consultation on the four ATF schemes valued at over £1m. During the first round of consultation 2300 responses were received with broad support for the Whitby scheme, the A59 scheme and the Victoria Avenue scheme. Over 50% of responses to the Oatlands Drive scheme were opposed. A second round of consultation engaged the public on more detailed designs that were developed following feedback in the first round.

At the time of writing this statement, the results from the second round of consultation are being collated and reviewed. A report setting out recommendations for each scheme will be presented to the BES Director and Executive members later this month.

Transforming Cities Fund Consultation Update

The County Council led bids to the Government's Transforming Cities Fund on behalf of Craven, Harrogate and Selby districts. As a result we were awarded a total of £31m to deliver Gateway schemes in the town centres of Skipton, Harrogate and Selby.

Public consultation exercises were completed during February and March and these received good levels of engagement and useful feedback, which will help to shape the proposals as the programme moves into more detailed design phases later this year. A

report and recommendations regarding key preliminary decisions will be presented to the Executive later this month.

The fund has been established to provide opportunities for improvement to city and town centre travel gateways, to upgrade provision for cycling and walking, to boost public transport and to support local economies.

Bus services

On 15 March Government published a National Bus Strategy entitled Bus Back Better. This provides us with an opportunity to draw up an improvement plan for bus services in North Yorkshire and to help bus operators recover from the impact of the pandemic. It also makes available the chance to secure some of the £3bn central government funding on offer.

The County Council currently supports bus travel by issuing 127,000 free bus passes to eligible residents under the National Concessionary Travel Scheme at a cost of approximately £7m per annum. Additionally, we spend £1.5m of our annual budget on subsidising rural bus services and providing financial support to community transport organisations.

Our public transport team looks for further, innovative ways in which we can make these financial contributions go further. As a result, a new Digital Demand Responsive service will be trialled from 1 July 2021. In the pilot area, transport will operate using timetables and routes based on demand rather than be fixed. In this way, transport would be provided in accordance with local needs. Local members have been kept informed. Full details will be published shortly.

Shared Rural Network for mobile phones

The Shared Rural Network (SRN) is a joint £1bn venture between the Government and the mobile phone operators to improve mobile phone coverage across the UK by 2025. I joined our project team in a recent meeting with Mobile UK, the organisation leading this scheme on behalf of all mobile operators. We have pledged our full support to the initiative.

Once in operation, the SRN will have a dramatic effect on 4G coverage in our county, raising it from about 60% of our geography to well over 90%. This is very good news for our residents, for our businesses, and for our visitors.

Local Full Fibre Network

The County Council's £15m gigabit fibre project is almost complete. 168.8km of fibre have now been installed under roads and footpaths of market towns throughout the county, with just 500m left to lay in Settle and Skipton. The network has connected up about 350 public buildings, and is ready to support further digital projects. We received £3m from the Y&NY LEP to fund extension of the network to six business parks, to roll-out the Internet of Things, and to provide public WiFi in 16 of our town centres. The free public WiFi in Northallerton is due to go live at the beginning of May, with other town centres to follow shortly.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DON MACKENZIE