

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 JULY 2021

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

Highways

A59 Kex Gill Diversion

This £61.6m scheme has continued to progress since the DfT's approval in February of our Outline Business Case (OBC). Planning permission was granted by our planning committee on 27 April. The planning conditions for the scheme require that the County Council undertake updated ecological and archaeological surveys, which have begun.

The tender documents were published on 23 June with a latest return date of 15 September. The Compulsory Purchase and Side Roads Orders have been published with a formal consultation period until the end of August. The project programme without a Public Inquiry indicates that construction could start this autumn. On the other hand, if a Public Inquiry is required, the start of works could be delayed by up to 15 months.

Construction is expected to take up to 18 months.

A19 re-opens

As members will know, we were able to re-open the newly-constructed A19 between Chapel Haddlesey and Eggborough on 21 June, and I thank the Chairman for attending the event and cutting the ceremonial ribbon.

This occasion was the culmination of extensive civil engineering works to reconstruct the highway and its embankments which had all suffered severe damage following prolonged rainfall and high winds brought by Storm Dennis in February 2020.

The sudden, unplanned closure of this key route caused considerable inconvenience to the travelling public, and had a severe impact in the local area and beyond. The County Council and its contractor Balfour Beatty deployed significant resources to get these major engineering works completed as quickly as possible. The work was carried out in compliance with the Covid-19 restrictions at all times. Further storms and flooding at the start of this year did threaten delays in the construction programme. Fortunately, the newly constructed causeway stood up well to the challenges of the weather, and with the provision of some late additional funding to accelerate matters, we were able to open the road to traffic five days ahead of schedule.

I thank most sincerely all those involved in the project for their hard work and dedication throughout the 16-month closure. I also recognise with gratitude the patience and understanding of local residents and businesses throughout the period of reconstruction.

NY Highways

NY Highways, the new trading company in the Brierley Group, was launched successfully on 1 June. This represents our largest ever commercial start-up project, in which 198 members

of staff were transferred, 196 vehicles were handed over, and 100 procurement contracts were awarded.

Transforming Cities Fund

Work on the Transforming Cities Fund Gateway schemes for Harrogate, Selby and Skipton continues following a period of public consultation in April. At its meeting in May, the Executive approved further design work for all three schemes. Subsequently, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority considered the Outline Business Cases for Harrogate and Skipton, and released additional funding £3m for Harrogate and £2m for Skipton. The Selby OBC will be considered by the Combined Authority in the autumn to allow for further work on cost, scope and land acquisition to be undertaken.

Further public consultation on the more detailed designs will take place in the autumn before final business cases are confirmed. The Executive will be asked to approve the final schemes before construction starts in 2022/23.

Bus Services

In response to the National Bus Strategy published by Government in March, the Executive determined last month to pursue the option of an Enhanced Partnership with local bus service operators. Our public transport team will now work with local bus service operators to establish a Bus Service Improvement Plan to be submitted to Government by October. It is likely that this Plan will form the basis of a bid to the Government's £3bn budget to improve bus services.

A new, digital demand responsive bus service commenced this month in an area covering Ripon, Masham, Bedale and surrounding villages. The YorBus pilot scheme is a flexible service allowing users to book travel to and from anywhere in the zone using an app. The service operates six days per week, significantly improving travel options in the area. It can be used by anyone wishing to travel in the pilot area, including visitors. The pilot will be reviewed at regular intervals and, if successful, may lead to many more similar schemes elsewhere in the county.

Broadband and mobile telephony

The Mobile Access North Yorkshire 5G project will go live in Coverdale next month. The project team is keeping the local community regularly updated on progress. Over 50 local residents attended a face-to-face drop-in session in May, and many expressed a keen interest in using the technology on offer.

After the launch of our free public WiFi scheme in Leyburn and Northallerton, the first phase of this service has now been introduced for Scarborough's seafront. The second and third phases covering the town centre and shopping area will start in late summer.

In due course, our free public WiFi project will benefit at least 16 town centres throughout North Yorkshire.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR DON MACKENZIE