

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 MAY 2018

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

Highways Programme 2018/19

After a long, cold winter, our highways capital works programme is underway. Many of our roads are showing clear signs of damage caused by snow, ice and daily gritting. Much of this deterioration will be addressed by scheduled repairs, whilst the rest will come under reactive maintenance work, which will include the use of Jetpatchers, specialist machines that will operate mainly in the Harrogate and Hambleton areas.

Of course, prevention is far more cost effective than repair and that is why we continue to invest in preventative treatments like surface dressing, particularly on our rural network and on residential estate roads.

The Highways Capital Programme for this year's maintenance schemes amounts to approximately £36m, of which £3m is from the Local Growth Fund and £2m from our own reserves. In addition, we received last year from Central Government an extra £1.65m to address winter damage. More recently there was a further announcement that NYCC would receive £3.5m from the Pothole Action Fund. These funds will be put to very good use on our 6,000 miles of highways.

Transport for the North (TfN)

On 1 April Transport for the North (TfN) became the first statutory Sub-National Transport Body in England. The County Council is one of the first rural authorities to join TfN and we have been successful in ensuring that our strategic transport needs are prioritised. These include upgrades to the A64 and dualling of the A66. Following representations from ourselves and Lancashire County Council, TfN will consider options to improve transport links between Craven and East Lancashire. The Secretary of State recently announced a feasibility study into re-opening the railway line between Skipton and Colne.

The leader and I share a place on the TfN Board, and, together with our officers, we are determined to ensure that the transport needs of a large rural area like our own continue to be recognised alongside those of the large metro conurbations.

Street lighting Accelerated LEDs project

Since September 2017 our electrical engineering team has been replacing incandescent street lights with energy-efficient LED lanterns. Our goal is to replace all 44,000 existing conventional lanterns by March 2020. This £13m programme will pay for itself within 10 years, and go on saving £1.2m every year thereafter in energy, maintenance and replacement costs.

Despite difficulties in recruiting staff for this programme, 5,300 new LED lanterns have been replaced so far. This work has been carried out by our term contractor, Ringway Infrastructure Services, who exceeded the performance target set for 2017/18 and, as a result, have been awarded the work to replace the remaining 39,000 lanterns between now and 2020.

Our own electrical engineering team has a strong track record in delivering major projects on time and on budget, including the replacement in recent years of 23,000 lighting columns and the conversion of 27,000 street lights to part-night operation.

Integrated Passenger Transport

Members will know from recent media coverage that the Council has submitted its response to the DfT consultation on the use of Section 19 and Section 22 permits under which our community transport organisations operate. Such permits provide exemption from much of the bureaucracy and overheads required of large commercial operators, and their use has been challenged. This is a very difficult situation with significant risks to bus services in our rural areas.

NYCC is very supportive of community transport operators and recognises their value as the only transport option for vulnerable and elderly residents. We seek clarification and are making sure that ministers understand the important role played by community transport in the country's largest rural county. I have also personally discussed these concerns with our MPs and remain hopeful that good sense will prevail, and that community transport will continue to operate as it does now.

We have made a small change to the way in which bus passes are renewed. Hitherto, a letter would be sent out to the holder asking if a new card was needed. Now a new card is automatically issued, which seems to be a sensible change. There are currently 127,000 bus passes issued to residents, including 119,000 on the basis of age, and 8,000 for disability. The cost of the concessionary fares scheme to the County Council is almost £8m per year.

Broadband

Details of which communities are likely to be connected up to superfast broadband under Phase3 are now available on the SFNY website. Members will recall this from my last statement in February: *The £20.5m contract for Phase3 of the SFNY broadband roll-out programme was awarded last month to BT plc, who have committed to connecting up 14,239 more properties. Of that number, some 12,500 will benefit from state-of-the-art Fibre to the Premise technology. Average download speeds will be 281Mbps, with some subscribers receiving up to 330Mbps, which is amongst the best anywhere in the country.*

First connections under this latest broadband expansion phase will be made later this year. Under Phases 1 and 2, which are now completed, some 166,000 premises were given access to superfast broadband at an average cost of just over £200, the lowest for any large rural authority.

NYCC has been successful in its bid to Government for funding of £15.1m to develop local full-fibre networks based around the 392 public buildings throughout the county currently connected to the NYnet Public Sector Network. This LFFN scheme has the potential to put over 5,000 businesses and 50,000 homes within reach of full fibre connectivity. This investment, which supplements the SFNY programme, will enhance further the all-important digital infrastructure in North Yorkshire.

DON MACKENZIE