

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

15 MAY 2019

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

For 2019/20, a record sum of over £55m has been allocated to highways-related schemes throughout the county. The total is made up of £27m of needs-based grant, the maximum £5.3m of incentives-based additional funding given for top-performing councils, £3.7m from reserves and parking surpluses, and the remaining £19m received from various targeted grants from the Department for Transport.

Almost £10m will be invested in surface dressing of more than 600 streets county-wide. This is a preventative process which protects road surfaces from damage by snow, ice and rain, restores skid resistance and provides a clean, uniform appearance.

Footpaths are also targeted for repair and sealing, with £2.5m budgeted to be spent.

Highways Maintenance Contract

On 16 April members of the Executive voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to establish a Teckal company, wholly owned by the County Council, and to make preparations for this company to take on the Highways Maintenance Contract when the current arrangement with Ringway comes to an end in March 2021.

This new company would be limited by shares, with a board of directors responsible for strategic decision making and policy setting, and for the appointment of a managing director.

The creation of this company will allow the County Council to award contracts directly to it by making use of the so-called 'Teckal'* exemption from the Public Contract Regulations 2015. This new company would join seven other existing NYCC-owned companies currently trading and bringing dividends, which are being used to support county council services. It would ensure a totally local focus, and would give the County Council greater direct control of, and flexibility with, operational matters on our highways. It would also have the commercial freedom to bid for work beyond the county's boundaries. Current operational staff members, who are very familiar with local circumstances, and have a personal commitment to the county, will have the right to transfer to the new company under TUPE.

*A Teckal company must fulfil three strict criteria: it is subject to the same controls as other internal departments of the council; at least 80% of the company's turnover derives from the contracting authority (in this case NYCC); there is no direct private capital participation in the company.

Temporary Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) Protocol

I am pleased to say the amended Temporary VAS Protocol, which was approved unanimously by the Executive in March, has been in operation since the beginning of last month.

Parish councils may now, following agreement with the County Council, purchase from recommended suppliers and install VAS equipment at approved locations on their local highways network. We await the first request to install equipment.

The existing temporary VAS lease scheme, which has been operating for the last four years, will continue to run alongside the new third-party purchase arrangements for as long as there is demand and whilst the equipment leased out to parishes remains serviceable.

Harrogate and Knaresborough Congestion Study

A wide public engagement, seeking the views of the towns' residents and businesses on congestion and the options to address it, started on 15 April and will run for 12 weeks until 8 July. Two packages of options for managing congestion have been presented: one contains diverse measures to boost sustainable travel and public transport and to encourage behaviour change; the other comprises similar proposals and includes also investment in the highways network in the shape of a relief road between the two towns.

Early indications suggest that there will be a very substantial response.

A59 diversion at Kex Gill

The Outline Business Case for the diversion of the A59 to a new, more stable alignment north of the gill was submitted to the Department for Transport in January. Work continues on the Full Business Case due to be ready for submission in November. Our highways officers remain confident that the bid for funding will be viewed positively. At the same time, a planning application is being drawn up to be determined later this year. The estimated cost of the scheme is £40m.

If all goes to plan, construction could start in spring 2020 with completion in summer 2021.

The A59 is due to be closed this week for the road to be resurfaced after the latest period of repair work following the discovery of instability below the highway.

Tour de Yorkshire

North Yorkshire is yet again the focus for a major cycling event.

The fifth edition of the Tour de Yorkshire is about to take place as this statement is submitted for inclusion in today's agenda papers. More than half of this four-day event takes place on the County Council's highways. Three North Yorkshire towns stage race finishes – Bedale, Selby and Scarborough – and the race circuit around Harrogate, which will be in use for the UCI World Championships in September, is being trialled on Day 2.

Broadband and Mobile Telephony

A significant milestone in the County Council's Superfast North Yorkshire project was attained last month: the 100,000th subscriber was connected up to SFNY-enabled superfast broadband provision. This brought total take-up from Phases One and Two to over 60%, the highest of any rural authority in the country. Phase Three is currently underway and will connect up 14,239 domestic and business properties, most using Fibre to the Premise technology giving download speeds of up to 330Mbps.

DON MACKENZIE