

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 August 2019 at 9.30 am at the Cairn Hotel, Ripon Road, Harrogate

Present:-

Members:-

County Councillor John Mann (in the Chair); County Councillors Philip Broadbank, Jim Clark, Richard Cooper, John Ennis, David Goode, Paul Haslam, Don Mackenzie, Zoe Metcalfe, Cliff Trotter, Geoff Webber and Robert Windass

In Attendance:-

County Council Officers:- Barrie Mason (Assistant Director, Highways and Transportation), Andrew Bainbridge (Team Leader Transport Planning, Highways and Transportation) and Ruth Gladstone and Kate Arscott (Democratic Services)

Approximately 40 members of the press and public

Apology for Absence:-

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor Michael Harrison. (It was reported that County Councillor Michael Harrison was also a member of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee and he had advised that he intended to attend that Committee's meeting at which the results of the Harrogate and Knaresborough congestion study public engagement would be considered.)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

35. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2019, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

36. Declarations of Interest

In respect of the item of business about the results of the Harrogate and Knaresborough congestion study public engagement:-

- County Councillor Philip Broadbank announced that his brother had a house on Forest Moor Road. That did not constitute a disclosable pecuniary interest and therefore he was able to speak and vote. He advised that he made this announcement for the purpose of transparency.

- County Councillor Paul Haslam advised that he lived on Bilton Lane in Harrogate which was close to one of the indicative routes. He reported that he had been granted a dispensation to enable him to speak, but not necessarily to vote.

37. Public Questions or Statements

Five questions or statements were put to the meeting by members of the public. Four related to the results of the Harrogate and Knaresborough Congestion Study public engagement and one related to parking around Harrogate Civic Centre. The five public questions or statements, together with the responds given at the meeting, are set out in the Appendix to these Minutes.

38. Results of Harrogate and Knaresborough Congestion Study Public Engagement

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services which advised of the headline results of the Harrogate and Knaresborough congestion study public engagement, the emerging trends and potential next steps, and sought the Committee's views on potential recommendations to be made to the County Council's Executive.

In summary, the report advised of the following:-

- Members of the public had been asked to give their views on a range of measures to combat congestion, from improvements to encourage more people to walk, cycle or use public transport, to options to manage demand and larger infrastructure projects such as park and ride services and an inner relief road for Harrogate. The engagement had aimed to find out, first of all, to what degree people perceived congestion as a problem, and then what types of measures they would support to address the issue.
- The responses to the public engagement had now been collated and analysed. This showed that more than 15,500 responses had been received to the County Council's survey. In total, 84% of respondents said they viewed traffic congestion as an issue in Harrogate and Knaresborough. In total, 78% of respondents did not support the option of an inner relief road between Harrogate and Knaresborough. For that reason, the report recommended that that proposal should not be taken further at this time. Based on local responses that included the relevant parish councils, the report also suggested further consideration of a bypass for Killinghall and a possible link from the B6162 Otley Road to the A61 Leeds Road.
- Measures with the strongest support included improving cycling and walking infrastructure (77%), introducing park and ride facilities (71%), encouraging smarter travel choices and behaviour change (75%), and the introduction of bus lanes and priority for buses at junctions (59%).
- The report suggested several possible next steps that acknowledge this support. These included:- producing a walking infrastructure plan; preparing "bid ready" cycling and walking routes so that funding opportunities can be seized as they arose; assessing the feasibility of a package of park and ride sites and services; assessing the potential for commercial bus services to carry park and ride passengers; working with bus operators to identify routes where priority measures could improve the commercial viability for the provision of services and identifying potential bus priority measures to achieve that; developing a package to encourage smarter choices and change behaviour,

building on the Open Harrogate initiative; considering the potential for higher-cost, longer-term solutions at key junctions (for example Woodlands junction and Parliament Street/Kings Road); identifying key junctions and congestion hotspots; and reviewing traffic signals to see where improvements might be made.

- The report advised that a congestion charge or increased parking charges had received little support, with 21% of respondents agreeing and 64% disagreeing. Therefore the report suggested that work on a congestion charge should be taken no further at this stage.
- The report suggested a review of on-street and off-street parking charges and consideration of expanding car parking management zones to encourage the use of, and support investment in, alternative modes of transport.

Barrie Mason (Assistant Director, Highways and Transportation) and Andrew Bainbridge (Team Leader Transport Planning, Highways and Transportation) introduced the report and responded to Members' questions.

The Committee debated the issue and Members' comments are set out below.

General comments:-

- Members were very pleased with the level of consultation and engagement. The public engagement was regarded as a genuine effort to find out what the public wanted. Members congratulated and thanked the officers for their hard work and effort.
- Members welcomed the recommendations on the whole, although there were some areas of disagreement. There were also a few concerns about other matters which are recorded below under the heading "Concerns about other matters".
- Councillor Richard Cooper (Leader of Harrogate Borough Council) highlighted that introducing sustainable transport would not be "the easy option". Consequently the recommendations in the report contained work which the County Council's BES Executive would be taking forward which would include things which would not be universally popular. To illustrate this point, Councillor Cooper gave examples of potential sustainable transport improvements such as extending the pedestrianisation of Harrogate town centre; giving buses priority at traffic lights; removing lanes for cars in Wetherby Road to provide priority bus lanes; segregated cycle lanes; very wide pavements and grass verges being taken away for cycle lanes; and higher parking charges to encourage people into other modes of transport. However, he advised that he would support such proposals and that the Borough Council would do all that it could to introduce proper sustainable measures.
- Members highlighted that good communication with stakeholders and residents would be essential in taking forward each proposal.
- A Member advised that he intended to make more detailed comments direct to the Executive. He clarified, however, that those comments would be positive, constructive and optimistic.

Concerns about other matters:-

- A few Members were critical that the recommendations: excluded looking at rail opportunities such as rail halts for Claro Road, Eastfield in Knaresborough, and

the Woodfield area in Bilton; for not being sufficiently aspirational in looking at smart, green and integrated solutions, solutions to support the more effective use of new technology in both cars for private use and in commercial vehicles; and for saying very little about commercial transport on the roads in the area.

- A few Members expressed disappointment about the apparent speed for progressing the proposals, whilst recognising that work was being undertaken as core interventions. They commented that the County Council should capitalise on the willingness which the public had shown to change.

Members' comments about the specific recommendations set out in the report are below:-

- Congestion charge/increased car parking changes:-
 - Parking permits should be instigated across Harrogate urban area because there is too much free parking at present, as evidenced in the difficulties experienced in trying to park around the Stray.
 - The public engagement had shown that a congestion charge was not welcomed by the public and it was correct that the County Council should not pursue such a measure at the current stage.
 - With regard to on-street and off-street parking charges, and an expansion of car parking management zones, some controversial proposals would arise from this measure but these are the areas which need to be looked at.
 - A full and explicit account should be taken of the reality that parking will potentially be displaced into residential areas and measures should be included to address that.
- Relief road/highway option – To not progress with the Harrogate inner relief road at this time:-
 - It was correct that the construction of an inner relief road in Harrogate was not recommended at this time.
 - There was a debate about the inclusion of the words “at this time” in this recommendation. The majority of Members commented that they had been reassured by the officers’ comments, given at an earlier stage of this meeting, that there was no intention of revisiting the inner relief road proposal in the foreseeable future. A Member highlighted that the current County Council could not “bind the hands” of future Councils, just as today’s residents of Harrogate could not “bind the hands” of future generations and their children and grandchildren and what they might decide to do in 30, 40 or 50 years into the future. Another Member commented that he thought it would be best if the words “at this time” were removed because there were organisations, eg Harrogate golf club, whose operations were not helped if there was any potential of a threat of a relief road being constructed through their land.
- Relief road/highway option – To undertake an initial assessment of a Killinghall bypass including, but not limited to, the existing adopted alignment:-
 - The situation at Killinghall needed to be addressed.

- Concern was expressed about the meaning of the words “not limited to” within the phrase “including, but not limited to, the existing adopted alignment”.
- 17 years previously, the County Council had scrapped proposals for Harrogate western and northern relief roads, at which time alternative measures had been suggested, namely, to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport, ie the same things as mentioned in the recommendations now before this Committee. At that time, a senior officer had said that the reasons behind the decision to scrap the scheme was because it was unbuildable and un-fundable. The Member commented that, if a bypass was un-fundable then, it is going to be even more un-fundable now. He suggested that, if the County Council wanted to look again at a western or Killinghall bypass, that it was likely to come to the same conclusion and that a bypass could not be done. He further highlighted that the world had moved on and that the County Council, at a recent meeting of full Council, had passed a motion on climate change, which put the County Council at the forefront of Councils dealing with climate change, and that needed to be taken into account when decisions, such as whether to undertake an initial assessment of a Killinghall bypass, were taken. Instead of looking to build more roads, the County Council should be considering innovative ways of dealing with congestion.
- A recent report from the Friends of the Earth, who were talking to Councils about how they could reduce their carbon footprint, suggested stopping the promotion of measures which created greenhouse gases, for example, increasing road capacity. Many years of evidence showed that new road capacity simply encouraged more road traffic and therefore increased greenhouse gas emissions. At present, the County Council had not commissioned any work on the environmental impact of such developments.
- The recommendation to undertake an initial assessment of a Killinghall bypass including, but not limited to, the existing adopted alignment should have been considered as part of the WSP report.
- Relief road/highway option – To undertake an initial assessment of a highway option to link the B6162 Otley Road to the A61 Leeds Road including consideration of new routes and upgrading of existing routes:-
 - The hope was expressed that the “option to link the B6162 Otley Road to the A61 Leeds Road” was not a resurrection of the former proposal for a western by-pass “by the backdoor”. The B6162 Otley Road to the A61 Leeds Road effectively represented about half of the former proposed western bypass.
 - An upgrade of the existing routes was preferable to new routes.
- Park and ride:-
 - To get park and ride to work, a “carrot and stick” approach would be needed and “the stick” would be to reduce the number of parking spaces in the town centre and to increase the cost of those spaces which were left. It needed to be made very clear to members of the public that park and ride was not an easy option.

- A Member suggested that, in the survey, one of the reasons why park and ride had not scored more highly was that the people who might use park and ride facilities came into Harrogate to work and left again to go home to Leeds or Bradford etc and, as such, the survey was less likely to have picked-up those people. They were also less likely to have been engaged with the local media because they did not live in the Harrogate district. Therefore such people might be under-represented, and the park and ride measure may be more popular measure than the survey results suggested.
- Councillor Richard Cooper (Leader of Harrogate Borough Council) advised that, if the Borough Council owned land which it was able to commit as part of a pilot scheme for park and ride, it would do so. He also commented that the Borough Council would work alongside the County Council to make the sustainable transport recommendations, arising from the public engagement, work.
- Concern was expressed about the high costs of bus fares.
- More bus shelters would be required, and bus companies needed to be persuaded to take a more positive attitude than they had shown previously. No person would stand in the pouring rain waiting for a bus when an alternative was available.
- Bus priority:-
 - This was welcomed. It was hoped that the County Council would progress this proposal quickly.
- Demand management and junctions review/improvements:-
 - There were some key junctions which should be looked at again to see if improvements could be made.
- Package:-
 - Elements of both Package B and Package E should be included in a strategy.

Resolved -

That the comments which County Councillors make at this meeting be forwarded to the Executive.

39. Work Programme

Considered -

The Committee's work programme, for the Committee to consider, develop and adopt.

The Chairman highlighted that items on Area Constituency Committees' work programmes should be relevant, in the public interest and add value. They should not duplicate work that was already underway.

It was confirmed that an update on school exclusions and The Grove Pupil Referral Unit was due to be submitted to the Committee's meeting on 7 November 2019. Confirmation was also provided that Andrew Jones MP had agreed to attend the Committee's meeting on 7 November 2019, subject to parliamentary business.

The Chairman advised that there was insufficient time available for preparation of a written report about the building of social housing for consideration at the Committee's meeting on 19 September 2019. He also asked Members to clarify whether they were seeking information from a housing professional about social housing, or from a planning professional about the 6,000 unimplemented planning permissions. It was highlighted that, in either regard, this was a Borough Council function. He added that the County Council did not usually scrutinise the implementation of Borough Council functions, and vice versa. A motion "that the impact of the lack of social housing across the constituency on the health and wellbeing of residents be included in the work programme" was put to the vote and was defeated. The Chairman asked the mover and seconder of the motion to email him following this meeting if they had an alternative suggestion which they would wish to take forward.

Members made suggestions about the work programme. The decisions arising from discussion of those suggestions are set out in the following Resolution.

Resolved -

- (a) That County Lines Gangs be included on the work programme, with the line of enquiry being to investigate what housing associations and private landlords should do to ensure that "cuckooing" is not taking place in their properties for drug dealing.
- (b) That the following suggestion be referred to the County Council's Climate Change Scrutiny Joint Sub-Committee:- What can be done to engage with local communities, Parent Teachers' Associations etc to address pollution problems caused by the transportation of children to schools?
- (c) That the Principal Democratic Services Officer investigate information already available concerning the major flows of children travelling from each geographic area into other areas to attend schools and that, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, such information be forwarded to County Councillor Paul Haslam.
- (d) That a note be emailed to Members to advise of the outcome of the meeting to which Andrew Bainbridge referred, when responding to the public question from Harrogate Borough Councillor Sue Lumby, regarding discussions with the Borough Council about how to move forward matters on the Section 106 agreement relating to Harrogate Civic Centre.
- (e) That local Members take forward requests for residents' parking schemes but that such requests be excluded from the Committee's work programme on the understanding that each is likely to be a local matter rather than a strategic, constituency-wide issue which Area Constituency Committees should be considering.
- (f) That the officer presenting the item "NYCC Digital Strategy" at the Committee's meeting be asked to prepare to answer questions about the work of "Open Harrogate"; how monies have been spent and the amount that remains; and how Members can help in its promotion as a way of encouraging use of sustainable transport measures.
- (g) That officers who are preparing the report "Impact of Highway Works Undertaken at Bond End, Knaresborough – Impact on Air Quality" for the Committee's meeting on 7 November 2019 be requested to include a section on lessons learned.

- (h) That an update be requested about the progress of the work, for which a bid of £4.6m has been awarded, to improve travel arrangements in the west of Harrogate, which included the Otley Road cycle path and charging points at Cargill Park, and that, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, this be dealt with either by including it on the work programme or by emailing it to Members.

The meeting concluded at approximately 12pm.

RAG/JR

37. Public Questions or Statements

(a) Results of Harrogate and Knaresborough Congestion Study Public Engagement

(i) Councillor Phil Ireland (Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport, Harrogate Borough Council)

Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency Committee: Harrogate Congestion Study.

Thank you Chair for the opportunity to speak. Firstly, I wanted to welcome the extensive consultation that has enabled us to ascertain the views of the community on these important transport matters. I would also like to thank the officers involved in the process as I appreciate some of the conversations and discussions on the issues at hand will have been emotionally charged at times.

Given the unusually high response, I do feel that we are now in a position where we have an excellent indication from the local community as to how it wishes North Yorkshire County Council to approach managing transport across Harrogate and Knaresborough.

In line with my response on behalf of Harrogate Borough Council; it is extremely encouraging to see strong support for cycling and walking infrastructure, Park and Ride, smarter travel and other bus based improvements.

Perhaps unsurprisingly there is reduced support for a charge to access central Harrogate, or for increasing parking charges. That said; the sustainable travel approach to transport planning is not the easy way out.

Should providing quality alternatives to the car not be successful in their own right in achieving modal shift towards walking, cycling and public transport then disincentives, such as parking charges will have to be investigated further.

It is, however critical that walking and cycling networks, bus priority measures and improved access to rail are in place prior to, or alongside, any significant changes to supply of car parking or access charges.

As Borough Council, we also need to set a positive example. We will continue to work with developers and NYCC to ensure improved bus routes, better cycling and walking infrastructure and new mobility options to accompany proposed development.

I will be launching a new car club for Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon in October to provide the community with an alternative to owning a car and we hope to have positive news on the Transforming Cities Fund in partnership with NYCC in due course.

As well as the respective Councils, all of us, together as a local community, have a responsibility here. 84% of us feel that there is congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough, yet there is a short average car journey length of only 2.6km. That represents a lot of trips that are walkable and easily completed by bicycle or a short bus trip.

Therefore – those of us who are able have to start walking, cycling or using public transport wherever possible to start to make a positive difference to existing conditions.

I am confident that Harrogate and Knaresborough can become better places for having a sustainable transport focussed approach and look forward to working with the county council on future projects.

(ii) Mr Chris Kitson, Chair, Nidd Gorge Community Action

...at this time?

Good morning councillors. In December 2017, when NYCC presented the 340 page OAR, they were told, almost unanimously, by this committee that the relief road was a bad idea.

At that stage, having already spent hundreds of thousands of pounds of our money on the Harrogate Relief Road Review a wise council would have realised that the writing was on the wall for the unpopular Nidd Gorge based road and walked away from it without wasting any more of our money. They could then have got on with the job of implementing the desperately needed sustainable measures and we could now be enjoying a reduction in traffic congestion in our towns.

Instead, our County Council, ignored our local democratic representatives and chose to extend the review by 18 months and spend even more of our precious money on: expensive WSP consultants; an expensive 243 page addendum to the OAR and an expensive public consultation. After all that extra expenditure, of our money, what is the conclusion?

The relief road is a bad idea.

At this time of devastating austerity, when North Yorkshire says it doesn't have the money for vital front-line services, when it can't provide youth clubs, when it can't subsidise school buses and when it is sacrificing Harrogate's Outstanding Pupil Referral Unit for want of money, can officers please tell me how much money has been spent on the Harrogate Congestion Study since December 7th 2017 - providing a breakdown of where this money has been spent, including the advertising budget for the survey?

And so, after three years of investigation, after three years of frittered public money and three years of stagnating traffic, North Yorkshire County council have finally conceded "*that this (inner relief road) proposal should not be taken further at this time.*" Hallelujah!

But wait, "at this time", what does that mean?

Does it mean that NYCC are going to do a bit more tinkering here and there, spend thousands on useless so called smart traffic lights, some inadequate cycle lanes, half-hearted park and ride and so on, and then sometime around 2026 decide they need to take yet another look at the Inner Relief Road, but next time present it as the 'Happy Highway' and pay Google Maps to airbrush over Nidd Gorge?

In all seriousness, I hope the Members of this Committee will consider, very carefully, whether they agree with having the words 'at this time' including in the recommendation at paragraph 7.4.

This clause alone is grounds for a vote of no confidence.

Every decade this Nidd Gorge road has reared its ugly head. Do we have to prepare coming generations, if we haven't all died by then, to fight this same battle in 2026 and 2036?

After three failed attempts in three decades, isn't it high time that North Yorkshire learnt from past mistakes and ruled out any further attempts to drive an Inner Northern Relief Road through the green belt. Isn't it high time you showed Nidd Gorge, the Nidderdale Greenway and the 'people like Bilton' the respect and protection they deserve.

Given this colossal waste of time and money, the unnecessary stress caused to the community, and their reluctance and inability to deliver the 21st century vision needed and requested by the people of Harrogate and Knaresborough, I am calling on this committee, on behalf of their constituents in Harrogate and Knaresborough, to take a vote of no confidence in the BES Executive - and the NYCC Executive, who continually endorse their poor decisions, waste our money and fail to meet our needs.

Thank you.

(iii) Keith Wilkinson MBE, Honorary Secretary, Bilton Conservation Group

"A cleaner, greener, Harrogate for the 21st Century?"

The residents of Harrogate and Knaresborough have made almost 16,000 responses to the Public Consultation Exercise on options to tackle Harrogate's perceived Traffic Congestion.

This huge exercise produced responses from all quarters of the two towns ensuring that all shades of opinion were sought.

Analysis of their views reveals that so far as diverting the A59 through Bilton Fields, Nidd Gorge, Harrogate Golf Course and Calcutt is concerned 78% did not agree that this would solve congestion and the potential impact in environmental terms was unacceptable.

Conversely, and more positively, there was between 59 and 77% support for a wide range of sustainable measures from Bus Lanes or Bus Priorities to Park and Ride options and improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure, behavioural change and so on.

The people of Harrogate and Knaresborough have made their views known and it is incumbent on NYCC to respect and implement them.

The Analysis Report contains a fundamental recommendation:

7.4 a) is 'Not to progress the Harrogate Inner Relief road at this time'.

The report recognises that we are now in the 21st Century, where 20th Century solutions to today's problems are no longer relevant as we

grapple with the dynamics of Climate Change and damaging CO2 emissions.

However, recommendation 7.4a) says 'not at this time', implying that this unacceptable road idea could be resurrected yet again. The stress and anxiety of the last three years have not gone away.

When I addressed his committee on 16th March 2017 I included these remarks:

"There is a growing prospect of Planning Blight affecting householders and businesses along the alignments of the 'Blue' and 'Green' routes.

HG1 – 3XX

HG3 – 2XX

As properties come onto the market Legal Searches are already identifying this Road Study on the NYCC website which is deterring would be buyers and sellers."

Today, in 2019, that Planning Blight remains and there are properties which have remained unsold since these 'Blue' and 'Green' routes first featured in the press in November 2016.

May we appeal to NYCC after their three failed attempts to breathe life into this diversion of the A59 diversion through Nidd Gorge – 1986, 1996, 2016 – to finally bury the threat of this irrelevant road and consign it to history once and for all.

Remove the Planning Blight and let people get on with their lives and livelihoods.

(iv) Rod Beardshall (Chair of transport working group, Zero Carbon Harrogate)

I'm speaking on behalf of Zero Carbon Harrogate regarding the "Results of the Harrogate and Knaresborough Congestion Study Public Engagement".

Many of us are highly critical of the process to date; the significant stress caused to communities and the waste of time and money to get to this point, but there is at least a very clear mandate for change. No longer can it be suggested that those lobbying for progressive, sustainable, environmentally sound solutions are a vocal minority. The public engagement has shown that we are in fact a vocal majority. This is most apparent in the rejection of major road infrastructure as a solution to our transport issues.

The results of the survey are strong and unequivocal. The interpretation and recommendations do not fully reflect this.

There are positives we support. The development of a walking infrastructure plan is one, given that walking is the most common method of active travel over short distances. We also support the recognition that much more investment is needed to allow school travel planning initiatives to bear long term fruit and that the Open Harrogate initiative

was simply a small step in the right direction. The review of parking charges, bus priority and support for cycling are also to be welcomed.

Overall however, the report appears weak and in some cases extremely worrying. In places it seems overly defensive, especially the laughable section 6, titled "External factors". Our main concerns relate to the following sections:

7.3a. The recommendation not to proceed with congestion charging. This is understandable based on survey results. However, the report states that this idea was unpopular due to the perceived impact on local residents and businesses. It would surely be worth investigating how residents' exemptions could be used to lessen the impact. Then, coupled with good park and ride and public transport, we could surely attract more visitors to what would be an increasingly pleasant and less traffic blighted town centre. Experience shows that businesses tend to flourish when traffic is limited, for example the Living Neighbourhoods initiative in Waltham Forest. Many experts agree that ultimately we will struggle to control congestion without road pricing. The idea should at least be kept alive.

7.4a. The wording "at this time" should be dropped to give greater reassurance that an inner relief road will not rear its ugly head again.

7.4b. If a Killinghall bypass is to be considered, we emphatically reject the current route, which threatens the Nidderdale Greenway.

7.4c. By failing to acknowledge that major new roads will not solve local congestion or help tackle climate change, and effectively resurrecting the Western bypass, the report risks a repeat of the mistakes and time wasting of the last few years and demonstrates no change in the underlying philosophy regarding transport planning.

Overall, this report fails to demonstrate the vision and determination needed to bring about the real changes needed. We hope this committee's views will reflect these concerns and also consider calling for changes in personnel to bring about the fresh thinking required.

(b) Parking Around Harrogate Civic Centre - Harrogate Borough Councillor Sue Lumby, Harrogate Coppice Valley Ward

My ward includes the Civic Centre and the volume of cars, not belonging to residents, parked on those roads adjacent to the Civic Centre and has increased dramatically in recent years and is rapidly getting worse. It is not just staff from the Civic Centre causing the problem, other people working in the area, guests of the Conference Centre and the many Hotels and B&Bs in the area also park there to avoid paying parking fees. Visitors to the town also park in these roads due to the close proximity of the town.

I have been contacted by a significant number of very concerned residents including pregnant women, those with young children and disabled people who struggle to carry shopping and luggage etc from 'house to car' never mind having to walk to the next road. It is getting to the stage that residents avoid, at all cost, using their cars because when they return they will not be able to park in their road all because other people are unwilling to pay to park their cars which inevitably deprives the Council of revenue. A significant number of residents in the area have already been canvassed and there is overwhelming support for resident parking permits. Feelings are running very high as

residents feel the daily impact on them has become untenable and they will not stop until something has been done to resolve the situation.

Because no laws are broken the only way to protect residents is to install Parking Permits. I know this problem also occurs in other wards however Coppice Valley Ward is in a unique position due to the location of the Civic Centre.

Finally David Bowe, Corporate Director for Business & Environmental Services, stated in a letter *“it should be noted that as part of their planning permission, Harrogate Borough Council is required to monitor the area and impact as part of their Travel Plan Management. The local area team are in consultation with Harrogate Borough Council officers regarding this monitoring and the impact that their staff/visitors parking may be having in the area.”*

My question therefore is what is the result of the ‘monitoring’ and ‘consultation’ process as I understand NYCC will be controlling the Section 106 Agreement?

Responses

Andrew Bainbridge (Team Leader Transport Planning, Highways and Transportation) responded, as follows, from an officer point of view, to the questions and statement:-

Before responding to the specific questions, I wish to clarify the meaning of “at this time” which is in the suggested recommendation to the Executive at paragraph 7.4(a) of the report. This has been raised by three of the members of the public speaking at this Committee.

There is no intention of revisiting this relief road proposal in the foreseeable future. However it is not felt appropriate for the current County Council to rule out such an option in perpetuity. Circumstances change and we do not think we should be limiting the options of future generations. It is of course open to Members of this Committee to suggest an alternative recommendation to the Executive.

With regards to the issue of Planning Blight being caused by stating “at this time”, this is not the case. Planning Blight is a specific legal term which in this case relates to specific road alignments formally approved by the County Council. The corridor of interest for the possible inner relief is not an approved or preferred route and as such Planning Blight does not formally exist, nor should it be declared on legal searches. We are however aware of a small number of property owners who feel that they have had difficulty selling their properties as a result of the consultation. Should the Executive ultimately agree the recommendation in 7.4(a), we will ensure that there is clarity around the status of the possible relief road corridor to minimise any issues for property owners.

To Councillor Ireland:-

Thank you Councillor Ireland for your comments. We look forward to continuing to work with the Borough Council as we take forward these suggestions for congestion relief in Harrogate and Knaresborough.

To Mr Kitson:-

Firstly I must make Members aware that the purpose of this work has been, from its inception, about identifying ways and means to reduce congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough and has not just been about looking at relief road options. As has been made clear from the start, a relief road was just one of a series of measures considered as part of this work.

The total costs incurred on the Harrogate Congestion Study since December 2017 are approximately £240k. Of this, approximately £140k was spent on consultant's fees in preparing the Options Assessment Report Addendum, £70k on consultant support in undertaking the public engagement, and an advertising budget of £30k for the public engagement.

Members should however be aware that the approach being taken is in line with Government requirements for funding major transport schemes, including the likes of park and ride, and that the majority of these costs would have been incurred regardless of the inclusion of a relief road option in the Harrogate Congestion Study. This was made clear in the report to the BES Executive Members in the report to them when they made their decision to look in more detail at all of the Harrogate Congestion Study options in December 2017.

Your question about 'at this time' has already been answered.

To Mr Wilkinson:-

Thank you Mr Wilkinson for your question. I believe that your question about Planning Blight, and your comment about the "at this time" suggested recommendation, have been answered already.

To Mr Beardshall:-

Thank you Mr Beardshall for your comments.

In response to your comments I would just highlight that recommendation 7.3b does suggest reviewing car parking charges as a means of encouraging the switch to sustainable transport modes. Experience has shown that to be effective as well as positive measures to encourage sustainable transport modes there will need to be measures to discourage inappropriate car use and officers are suggesting that at this stage car parking charges are likely to be more acceptable and deliverable than a congestion charge.

Additionally the recommendations to look at the feasibility of a Killinghall Bypass and a link between Otley Road and the A61 south of Harrogate have been included in direct response to requests from the local elected parish councils and in no way represent a resurrection of the Western Bypass which the County Council has already discounted.

To Councillor Lumby:-

Thank you Councillor Lumby for your question. I am aware that Pam Johnson from our Transport and Development Team emailed you on 5 August with details of what the County Council are intending to do with regards to the enforcement of this S106 agreement with Harrogate Borough Council and offering to meet with you and local resident committee. However, for the benefit of Members of this committee, it is worthwhile clarifying the situation. The Section 106 Agreement to which Councillor Lumby refers is linked to the planning permission for the new Harrogate Borough Council Civic Centre. In this instance Harrogate Borough Council is the developer, and the authority enforcing the agreement is North Yorkshire County Council. The obligations in the Agreement are for the Borough Council to discharge, and for the County Council to enforce. County Council officers have contacted the Borough Council to arrange to meet to discuss how to move matters on the Section 106 agreement forward. However the current holiday period means a date is yet to be agreed. As Members are probably aware, residential parking zones, as suggested by Councillor Lumby, are set up to discourage commuter and long-stay parking in areas where parking is at a premium. To introduce a scheme, the suitability of the location

would have to be assessed against the County Council's agreed criteria and a formal Traffic Regulation Order would be required.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Highways and Public Passenger Transport)

County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Highways and Public Passenger Transport) commented on the public questions and statements as follows. He firstly highlighted that he was speaking for himself as Executive Member, and not from the Executive which had yet to consider the results of the public engagement.

To Councillor Phil Ireland:-

I know that Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council continue to work closely together on all matters regarding congestion, travel and parking. Much of what you say I totally agree with, but there are a few issues here where your comments and my views differ. First, North Yorkshire County Council has a "business as usual" programme to improve cycling and walking facilities and at the moment we are engaged on building an off-street cycle path on Otley Road. So far we have met nothing but opposition to that. I think every single resident of Otley Road who has contacted us is against the cycle path. They like cycling, they like cycle paths, but not in front of their houses.

The other issue we have is that the Stray Defence Association is also raising serious concerns. Here I call on Councillor Phil Ireland, since Harrogate Borough Council are the guardians of the Stray, to help the County Council secure the go-ahead from the Stray Defence Association in order to arrange replacement land for that which we intend to take. It's not green land. It's simply highway verge, concreted over, which we wish to take to construct this off-road cycle path. I say again that this is "business as usual". That is money which the County Council are intending to spend but are meeting up with a great deal of opposition from the public. So I look forward to Harrogate Borough Council's support with these "business as usual" schemes.

I don't share Councillor Phil Ireland's view that we should introduce all of these green measures before we consider an increase in parking charges or a congestion charge. Obviously there are mixed views about this. However, as Councillor Ireland himself knows, Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council are currently engaged in a wide-ranging review of parking in Harrogate and, so far, there is absolutely no plan either to remove parking charges, which many businesses are asking us to do, or indeed freeze them. We will be reviewing parking charges shortly and, not having changed or increased them for at least three years, we shall be looking certainly for on-street parking charges to be increased to obtain further funds which we will continue to invest in sustainable transport measures like, for example, reducing the downtime of the Starbeck level crossing. North Yorkshire County Council also has funding in place, some of it from parking surpluses, to invest in track and signalling upgrades at Cattal in order to enable two trains per hour between Knaresborough and York which is currently not routinely possible.

The other reason why I have some disagreement is in terms of, whether an improvement in public and sustainable transport will encourage more people not to use their cars. I have some doubts about that. Harrogate has one of the best bus services in the country. Currently buses are less than half full and, in many cases, are less than a third full. So the availability of buses is already there yet people are not choosing to use them. That is why I believe that we can't simply look at improving sustainable travel facilities without looking at disincentives such as parking charges, and possibly a congestion charge although I agree that that is probably not an area where we wish to go now.

We should be aware of what people should do to change their behaviour. I don't wish to personalise this but I hope that everyone who has spoken today, or intends to speak, can say that he or she chooses to walk or take public transport, or go by bike, rather than drive relatively short distances.

Just a brief word about park and ride. This has been mentioned by many people. At the moment we have three park and ride sites in North Yorkshire: two in Scarborough and one in Whitby. The two Scarborough ones cost the taxpayer £500,000 pa to run, irrespective of the initial millions of pounds of capital investment to build those sites and, at the moment, we have taken the decision to close those two Scarborough sites from the beginning of November until the end of March because of under-use and in order to save taxpayers' money so we can spend that money on other good causes.

I am reminded that, on 13 September 2018, there was a front page headline, which took me a bit by surprise, and County Council officers too, that Harrogate Borough Council and Transdev were in advanced talks to introduce a park and ride system at Pannal. Now that was a year ago and I would be interested to learn what has happened with that proposal. It is great to talk about these things but park and ride involves enormous financial investment initially and it will involve a lot of money to keep them going on a revenue basis.

To Mr Chris Kitson, I have to say "a load of rubbish" regarding the fact that what we spent on the congestion study and public engagement so far means we cannot subsidise school buses, and we are sacrificing Harrogate's outstanding Pupil Referral Unit. I suggest that people, like Mr Kitson, don't just look at the headlines but investigate the matter rather more. With regard to the Pupil Referral Unit, we decided investing £30,000 per pupil in that Unit, when we invest only around £4,500 per ordinary pupil, was too much and there was a better way of doing this, and a better value for money way of doing this. Also we do subsidise school buses. We currently spend over £20,000,000 on school buses. To suggest that the County Council doesn't subsidise school buses is rubbish.

I totally support what officers say about the wording "at this time". In fact, I am reminded that "at this time" was exactly what many responses suggested, including Harrogate Borough Council's: namely that the County Council should not be looking at an inner relief road "at this time". I think it would be totally unfair of us to bind the hands of future generations when we don't know what the circumstances are going to be at that time. Certainly, "for the foreseeable future" is a perfectly fair phrase to use in this instance.

Regarding Planning Blight, there is no statutory Planning Blight on any of the options for an inner relief road. There is the potential for Planning Blight on the existing adopted route, what is left of it, of the northern relief road. We have, from time to time, made appropriate payments relating to that adopted alignment. However, there is absolutely no statutory Blight associated with the inner relief road. All I suggest is, that the constant reminders in the media that Blight exists threatens to cause Blight where none exists.

I refer to Mr Rod Beardshall's support for the introduction of a congestion charge. I agree with the report that this is not considered at this time. I note that Mr Beardshall doesn't feel that we should look into any other road infrastructure but, in the case of the Killinghall bypass, and in the case of the so-called western relief road, we would simply be responding to the wishes and comments made by our constituents, including those of County Councillors Clark and Trotter, requesting that North Yorkshire County Council need to look at road infrastructure because, in their opinion, we cannot continue to build thousands and thousands of houses and expect a road infrastructure, which has not been expanded for over thirty years, to manage to cope. That is what

they are saying and I believe that their views are worth as much as any other words mentioned here today that speak against that.

Finally, to Harrogate Borough Councillor Sue Lumby, this is something you have raised with me on two or three occasions previously. I am sorry you have felt it necessary to bring it to this Committee today. Many elected Members around this table today know that on-street parking just outside the town centre is a major problem. Parking near big employers, like the hospital and secondary schools, can cause access problems on the public highway. Ask County Councillor John Ennis, people living near the Skipton Building Society, or people living near Scarborough hospital. These are situations which occur everywhere. However, at this stage, for any introduction of a residential parking scheme, which requires third-party funding, we normally go to the employer for that, unsuccessfully in most cases, but certainly in this case I think it would be fair to ask the question. If Councillor Sue Lumby feels that congestion on the streets is being caused by Harrogate Borough Council, then perhaps that Council should consider the funding of a residential parking scheme for that area. All I say is, join the queue. There is a long queue of requests to introduce residential parking schemes in residential areas.