

**Joint Special Meeting of the
Environment and Sustainable
Communities Overview and Scrutiny
Committee and the Economy and
Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



5 May 2023

**Regional and Local Transport: Policy
and Delivery.**

**Report of Amy Harhoff Corporate Director of Regeneration,
Economy, and Growth**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the special meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on transport policy and delivery in County Durham and the wider region.

Executive summary

- 2 Arrangements have been made for Mark Jackson, Head of Transport and Contract Services, and his senior officers to attend on 5th May 2023 to provide a presentation focusing on Transport Policy and Delivery at both the regional and local level. The functions of Transport policy and delivery will be impacted by devolution and potential issues related to the establishment of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) will be covered.
- 3 While Air Quality and Low Carbon issues are highly relevant to this session, there will also be separate overview and scrutiny sessions relating specifically to these subject areas.
- 4 A copy of the presentation is attached as appendix 2.

Recommendations

- 5 Members of the Committee are asked to note information contained within this report and presentation accordingly

Background – Structure and Governance

- 6 Following discussions with the chairs of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed that a special joint committee would be held to consider overall transport policy and delivery in County Durham.
- 7 Transport policy and delivery are already shared at a regional and local level with regional responsibility currently being focussed on the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC). The creation of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) will mean that the JTC will no longer exist and that NEMCA will exercise the devolved transport functions.
- 8 The Mayoral Functions relating to transport include the power to draw up a Local Transport Plan and strategies, bus franchising powers, the ability to pay grants to bus service operators and to the Constituent Councils for exercising transport functions. All other functions will be Non-Mayoral Functions.
- 9 The presentation will firstly give an overview of policy and devolution before focusing on how transport infrastructure is currently delivered at a local level. Following discussions with both chairs, the presentation will be divided between active travel, buses, new transport infrastructure and rail, and electric vehicle infrastructure.
- 10 Appendix 2 to this report contains a presentation that provides an overview of the transport policy and delivery. The Head of Transport and Contract Services and senior members of his team will be in attendance to deliver the presentation to the Committee's meeting and answer any questions.

DCC Transport, Transport Policy, and Devolution

- 11 The Head of Transport & Contract Services has 3 teams namely: Integrated Passenger Transport, Transport and Infrastructure funding, and Strategic Traffic. The Head of Transport also receives policy support from the Spatial Policy team, sitting within the REG directorate as part of the Housing and Planning Service. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Team sits within the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change directorate as part of the Environment Service Area.

- 12 Transport policy is written at national, sub national, regional, and local levels and is a fundamental part of economic, environmental, public health, and planning policies. At national level, transport policy focuses on policies to enable economic growth, decarbonise transport and improve air quality and is set out by the Department for Transport.
- 13 At sub-national level, the vision for the transport network is co-ordinated by Transport for the North (TfN) who provide policies on issues including the strategic road and rail networks. At the regional level, transport policy is drafted by Transport North East and adopted by the Joint Transport Committee (JTC). The JTC includes our Economic Regeneration and Partnerships Portfolio Holder as one of its key members and provides strategic leadership on the transport agenda in the region. The JTC will though be replaced by the NEMCA as part of the devolution deal. Then North East Transport Plan (2021) will then be updated as a first priority of the MCA and will include specific targets relating to quantifiable carbon reductions as a result of transport policy.
- 14 At a local level, Durham County Council have responsibility for delivering local strategies and delivery plans such as the Rights of Way Improvements Plan, Electric Vehicle Charge Points Plan and local parking standards via the County Durham Plan. We also have plans related to improving Air Quality in Durham City and reducing our Carbon output as part of the Climate Emergency Response Plan.
- 15 Whilst strategic transport policy may sit with Transport for the North and the JTC (soon to be NEMCA), the delivery of transport projects, highways improvements and our capital scheme programme remain the responsibility of Durham County Council.
- 16 At every geographical level, there is a clear link between the role of transport supporting economic growth and this is articulated locally in our Inclusive Economic Strategy. However, over the past 5 years, there has been a significant shift in emphasis towards clean growth, decarbonising transport, and tackling the impact on climate change and air quality.

Active Travel

- 17 Active Travel continues to be an area of growth and investment and gained particular momentum as the government responded to the pandemic. It features prominently in policy commitments to decarbonise transport at a national scale and the governments vision is best articulated in their 2020 Cycling and Walking strategy '[Gear Change – A bold vision for cycling and walking](#)'. There is also

detailed guidance note (LTN 1/20) which sets out specific standards expected for cycling infrastructure. The government has also created 'Active Travel England', a new inspectorate for walking and cycling links, whose mission is to ensure that all new developments must include quality active travel links.

- 18 Active Travel policy and the importance of walking and cycling is now embedded within the County Durham plan and its supplementary planning documents. The Council has developed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) for 12 of our main towns which must be considered as part of the planning application process. As a council we have been delivering our [Strategic Walking and Cycling Delivery Plan 2019-29](#) which included projects related to all aspects of active travel. The progress so far includes £800,000 worth of active travel corridors in Newton Aycliffe, £1.5 million worth of investment on NCN 1, new town cycling maps and borrow a bike scheme across the County.
- 19 The presentation will cover both the improvements of policy integration at DCC and many of the individual projects that have been delivered by the Active travel and the Transport Infrastructure team.

Buses

- 20 Over 90% of local bus services used to operate without financial support. However, the impact of the pandemic on the bus network in County Durham has been severe. Patronage and consequently the fares income used to support bus service has been negatively impacted. Bus passengers are around 80% of pre pandemic levels, and the bus operators have been struggling to retain local services as well as staff, as bus revenues have been reduced and fuel costs have increased.
- 21 However, despite these negative headlines relating to bus services in the aftermath of the pandemic, it could be time to 'talk our buses up'. In April 2022 DfT announce that bus services in the area covered by the JTC would receive a funding allocation of £163 million pounds as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This will allow NECMA and the constituent authorities to invest in the bus network between 2022 and 2025. The BSIP funding is to be made-up of £73m capital and £89m revenue. The new funding will be used to create new services, increase the frequencies, extend operating hours and crucially, for the residents of County Durham, reduce daily fees when using bus services.
- 22 The presentation will cover both the challenges of recovering from the pandemic and the opportunities provided by the BSIP.

New Transport Infrastructure and Rail

- 23 The presentation will be an overview of current and future major transport infrastructure projects. In 2022/23, DCC will be completing the delivery of a new Durham bus station, a new junction near at the New Inn traffic lights and as well as new coach parking within Durham City. In 2023/24, DCC have over £70 million worth of transport projects being delivered around the County including new transport infrastructure at Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland. The Toft Hill bypass scheme continues towards development after receiving a funding allocation. There will also be significant junction improvements on the A19 corridor at the Seaton Lane junction and at the Jade Enterprise Zone junction.
- 24 The Council are progressing more 'medium to long term' funding opportunities on the local rail network as a result of the 'Restoring Your Railways' fund. Notably, we are progressing a business case for a new unmanned train station and car park at Ferryhill. We continue to work on feasibility studies relating to the concept of a potential Consett -Newcastle passenger service as well as new passenger service on the Weardale railway that will link the Bishop and Weardale railway lines.
- 25 Working as DCC and as part of the NECMA, we will continue to lobby the sub national and national government regarding the reinstatement of the Leamside Line, which would enable extra capacity for passenger and freight services as an alternative to the congested ECML. We will also lobby nationally and sub nationally to increase the frequencies of transnational services stopping at Chester le Street on the ECML and on the Durham Coast Line at Horden and Seaham.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

- 26 The percentage share of new cars sold that are fully electric has taken off since 2019. In 2022 the market share of new cars sold that were fully electric doubled from 10.7% to 22.9%. The Council must play a role in ensuring that residents have sufficient chargepoints available to charge their cars.
- 27 The [North East Zero Emission Vehicle Policy](#) (2022) states that the North East currently only has 2-5%¹ of the fast chargers required by 2035 and only 12-29% of the rapid infrastructure required to support the levels of 2035 demand. DCC has also committed to 35k fewer

¹ Pg. 42 of the North East Zero Emissions Vehicle Policy <https://www.transportnortheast.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/TNE-ZEV-Policy.pdf>

petrol and diesel cars on the road by 2035 in our [Climate Emergency Response Plan](#)².

- 28 The presentation is an overview of various projects that have been delivered by the EV team at Durham County Council. These projects have been underpinned by the Councils Charge Point Delivery Plan (2021). Since 2019, Durham has been very successful in being awarded funding grants and delivering several projects related to the delivery of charge points. The council have now installed over 200 new chargepoints. These successful projects delivery has recently led to the council being awarded significant funding (£4.375m) to deliver the LEVI project. This will support the council's efforts to locate new charge points at another 250 sites across the County.

Conclusion

- 29 The attached report and presentation provide an opportunity for Members to consider and comment on the way in which transport are policy and operations is delivered.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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² Pg 35 of the CERP - <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s157682/CERP2%20-%20Plan.pdf>

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

This report is for information only

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable

Appendix 2: Presentation
