

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



4 March 2025

Regional and Local Transport: Policy and Delivery.

Report of Alan Patrickson Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide the special joint 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 4th March 2025 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 the new North East (Mayoral) Combined Authority (NECA), which will be covered in the presentation.
- 3 While Air Quality and Low Carbon issues are highly relevant to this session, there has been a 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 Special Joint Environment and Sustainable Communities and Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny 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 and devolved transport functions currently being exercised by NECA.
- 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 the success of last year's session, the presentation will follow the same format and be divided between active travel, passenger transport, 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 and Contract Services has three teams, namely: Integrated Passenger Transport, Transport and Infrastructure funding, and Strategic Traffic. The Head of Transport also receives policy support from the Strategy and Delivery Team, sitting within the Neighbourhoods and Climate Change directorate, as part of the Planning and Housing 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 level 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 NECA, who have devolved transport powers following the transition into a Mayoral Combined Authority in May 2024.
- 14 At a local level, Durham County Council have responsibility for delivering local strategies and delivery plans such as the Rights of Way Improvement 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 TfN and NECA, 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 11 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 securing £2.5M for the North Durham Active Travel Corridor (New College to Arnison Centre), securing £3.7M for Aykley Heads Innovation District's *Connectivity, Woodland, Parkland* programme, delivering the Towns and Villages £3.75M Walking and Cycling Programme, delivery of primary and secondary LCWIP routes in Durham City and Bishop Auckland, 12 new town cycling maps, Love to Ride campaign and delivering the Borrow a Bike scheme across the county.
- 19 The presentation will cover both the improvements of policy integration at Durham County Council and many of the individual projects that have been delivered by the Active Travel and the Transport Infrastructure team.

Passenger Transport

- 20 Durham County Council continues to undertake its passenger transport functions through an IPTG (Integrated Passenger Transport Group) in line with Government's best practice guidance. The IPTG delivers public transport, home to school transport, Special Education Needs (SEN) transport and adult social care transport. It also has close links with health, clinical commissioning groups and the North East Ambulance Service.
- 21 The IPTG manage the operational delivery and contract management of circa 1,700 transport contracts covering local bus services, home to school transport and social care transport with circa 475 transport suppliers.
- 22 Integrating transport in this way is especially important in more rural areas, enabling the authority to create packages of work across sectors to maximise the use of vehicles and staff, ensure full use is made of existing local bus services for education and social work purposes and deliver consistency of standards across different modes.

- 23 The council also values the benefits of the harmonisation of policy and delivery across the economic development, planning, housing, parking and transport functions. This approach ensures that we can maximise transport's contribution to economic growth in the county.
- 24 The IPTG structure is made up of three sections: Contracts and Monitoring, Network Planning and Services and Operations and Information. The presentation will cover information and data from all three areas.

New Transport Infrastructure and Rail

- 25 The presentation will be an overview of current and future major transport infrastructure projects. Durham County Council have completed the delivery of the A19 Dalton Park signal-controlled junction, Snipereley Park and Ride extension, improvements and an extension to the Locomotion car park in Shildon and capacity improvements on the A167 Rushyford roundabout and A688 Princes Street junction. There are currently over £40M of transport projects for the county, which include an active travel northern corridor from County Hall roundabout to Snipereley roundabout and Stockton to Darlington 19km active travel route. Public consultation on the Toft Hill Bypass was completed in November 2024 and the comments are currently being reviewed. Bishop Gateway is currently in pre-planning stage and Bishop Auckland Bus Station and surface level car park are to be completed by late 2025 with the intention to open in early 2026.
- 26 A business case has been submitted for funding a new unmanned station, car park and passenger service on the Stillington Line. 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.
- 27 Working as Durham County Council and as part of NECA, 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 East Coast Main Line (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

- 28 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.
- 29 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 petrol and diesel cars on the road by 2035 in our [Climate Emergency Response Plan](#)². There has been a gradual increase from April 2023 to January 2025 in terms of usage of Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCP) and this is expected to grow at an increased rate following the transition to EV and with the second-hand market becoming more affordable.
- 30 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 council's 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 with the study commencing in Autumn 2024 and first installations are to take place in Spring 2025.
- 31 A further 16 EVCP are to be installed utilising ORCS and Level Up Funding at rural locations across County Durham – a mix of slow, fast, and rapid charging. First installations have commenced April 2024 and final installations at NetPark will be completed by Summer 2025. Another submission will be made later in the year under LEVI for an additional £3M to install 200 EVCP's on housing association land in the coming years. This is to be finalised with NECA.
- 32 The council are also planning to install slow and rapid chargepoints, for private and fleet charging, at strategic fleet sites once surveys are complete, such as a further 10x dual 22kw chargers at our

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>

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

Meadowfield Depot and additional rapid 50kw+ chargers to enable quick top up where required.

- 33 In addition to this Durham County Council hope to install EV charging devices such as connections to existing 32 or 64 amp commando sockets to use as EV charging ports and potentially lamppost charging to allow slow overnight charging of fleet vehicles.

Conclusion

- 34 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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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
