



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **Thursday, 18 January 2007**

agenda item number

from: **Cabinet Member for Environment**

## **REPORT FOR PERIOD DECEMBER 2007**

### **1. Local Transport Plans – Settlement for 2007/08**

The Local Transport Capital Settlement for 2007/08 was received from Department for Transport (DfT) on 18 December 2006 detailing the funding allocations for integrated transport and maintenance schemes. The Settlement was based on assessments of the two second Local Transport Plans (for North Nottinghamshire and Greater Nottingham) and the two Delivery Reports which summarised the delivery of the first Local Transport Plans.

Both Local Transport Plans and both Delivery Reports were assessed as EXCELLENT. This assessment is the top of four classifications given by DfT and has resulted in the County Council being awarded the maximum 25% financial bonus for the integrated transport measures programme in North Nottinghamshire and in Greater Nottingham. In financial terms this equates to approximately an additional £8million to the County Council during the period 2007/08 to 2010/11 for integrated transport measures (approximately £1million extra per year for each of the North Nottinghamshire and Greater Nottingham areas). As detailed within the report presented to Cabinet on 6 December 2006, there will be an increased level of Member involvement in the development of future integrated transport programmes, utilising presentations and discussions at meetings with the district- based County Members' Forums.

### **2. Building Better Communities**

Since its inception during 2004 the BBC initiative has made noticeable improvements to the environment across the County and by December last year we had delivered over 525 schemes. Given that the first projects commenced in the summer of 2004 this equates to an average of over 15 schemes per month. With many more projects in the 2006/07 programme set to complete before the end of March I am confident that we will pass the 600 scheme mark within the next four months. This is a formidable achievement and I would like to thank

everyone who has contributed to the programme over the last two years.

The programme of Flagship schemes has continued with major improvement being completed at Canon Square Retford and Broadgate Beeston, with works progressing at Church Street Mansfield and Middlegate Newark. Each of these projects has been jointly funded with partners in total attracting almost £1.5 million of external funding.

Applications for the 2007/08 programme have now been submitted and are being assessed by the Project Manager. I will be approving the programme in the near future with a similar split between highways, conservation and flagship schemes as last year. I anticipate that Members will receive details of projects within their ward during March.

### 3. **Sherwood: The Living Legend**

I am sure fellow members will be aware that the County Council, on behalf of a wider partnership, has submitted a Living Landmarks application for Sherwood: The Living Legend, and this project is currently one of 6 shortlisted projects competing to win a £50million grant from the BIG Lottery Fund.

A Living Legend conference was held in November 2006 and a total of 107 people attended comprising NCC employees, members and local interest groups. All attendees were very supportive of the bid and raised a number of constructive comments and questions which will help to improve the shape of the bid.

To ensure that a wider audience continues to be engaged with the progress of this bid, a new website is being commissioned to act as a focal point for all information about the project.

### 4. **Beeston Broadgate**

I am delighted to be able to report that the Broadgate area of Beeston has been awarded the Association of Town Management (ATCM) Project of the Year Award in the Creating a Quality Environment category. The ATCM judged the scheme to be an excellent example of local residents and businesses putting forward ideas for the regeneration of their town centre which were then carried forward by a partnership of local authorities and other agencies.

The main focus of the scheme was the Broadgate Park area where a new high quality public space has been created with new seating, lighting and paving along with improvements to make the area more accessible for all. I would like to congratulate all the officers involved in the success of this project.

## 5. Recent Developments in Nottinghamshire's Rail Network

I have approved expenditure on a number of important projects which contribute to the development of the rail network:

- **Nottingham Station Masterplan:** since 2002 the Council, along with Nottingham City Council and East Midlands Development Agency has been funding the development of a masterplan to completely renovate and upgrade Nottingham Station and I have agreed the County Council's contribution to the next phase of the work
- **Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership:** in July 2006 the Department for Transport (DfT) Rail Executive designated the rail service between Grantham and Skegness as a Community Rail Service for which there is a Community Rail Partnership (CRP). The partnership encourages local focus on the service and promotes usage. The DfT have decided to extend the designation to the whole service between Nottingham and Skegness and the Council has been invited to join the CRP at an annual contribution of £5,000.
- **Kirkby Tunnel Study:** Kirkby Tunnel was built in 1846 to take double track although railtrack now have doubts that it would meet modern requirements for double track. When the Robin Hood Line first opened single track was adequate for the hourly service, however, the RHL has proved so successful that services are now almost double the original frequency and the single track sections are a severe impediment to reliability. At the request of the County Council Network Rail has agreed to undertake a study of Kirkby tunnel to establish the feasibility of reinstating the double track on this section. The cost of the study will be met equally by EMDA and the County Council.
- **Nottingham – Lincoln linespeed study:** the railway line between Nottingham – Newark – Lincoln is straight and flat but it is subject to speed restrictions along its entire length. Faster trains have begun to use the line and the potential for shorter journey times would help to attract travellers to switch to rail from the congested A46. At the Council's request Network Rail will undertake a study of the line to establish what works would be required to raise the line-speed to 90mph and consultants working on the Station Masterplan will look at the perceived benefits of this work. EMDA and Lincolnshire County Council have also agreed to contribute towards the cost of these studies.
- **Trowel Junction Study:** during 2007 Network Rail plans to renew all the track and signalling at Trowell Junction and they admit that they have chosen to install the cheapest scheme which will result in trains having to slow down from 80mph to 30mph. I have agreed that consultants will be commissioned to undertake an independent study to ascertain whether an improved scheme is available at limited cost. If this proves to be the case a formal request will be made to Network Rail to amend their proposals.

6. **Speed Limits in Nottinghamshire**

In January 2004 I agreed an interim village speed limit policy in line with the Government's aspiration to see a 30mph limit in all villages. The Department for Transport (DfT) subsequently published further guidance with a new definition of a village based on frontage development.

16 villages with an historic accident record were proposed for new 30mph speed limits (40mph on Class A roads where appropriate) in phase 1 of the interim policy. The new definition of a village by the DfT and more recent accident data has meant that a further 8 villages are now under consideration. Phase 2 will look at the remaining 11 villages with no speed limit and no accident record, followed by those villages with speed limits higher than the desired 30 mph.

A more recent DfT Circular 'Setting Local Speed Limits' requires local authorities to set speed limits which are rational, consistent and appropriate for the circumstances across the whole of the national network. All authorities are now required to review the speed limits on all A and B Class roads and any changes required must be carried out by 2011. This review will take place alongside the review in villages and will include those villages which fall on A or B Class roads.

7. **Cycling Strategy**

The last Cycling Strategy was published in 1997. It contained targets and ambitions that have been largely superseded by current Government Policy. Cycling contributes towards many of the County Council's objectives for increasing accessibility, improving air quality, reducing congestion and it has substantial health benefits.

Nottinghamshire has traditionally been considered a good county for cycling provision but there is a need to ensure that this strong base is developed and actual numbers of cyclists are increased to accompany the investment in this mode of transport. Therefore, I was pleased to approve a new Nottinghamshire Cycling Strategy which will refocus minds on key areas and ensure a consistent approach across the authority. An action plan has been produced in conjunction with the strategy to take forward the key aims. This will be reviewed every six months and I will be receiving an annual report to monitor progress.

8. **Great Nottinghamshire Bike Ride Presentation Evening**

I am delighted to report that cyclists in the 25<sup>th</sup> Great Nottinghamshire Bike Ride have collected over £42,000 for local charities – When You Wish Upon a Star, Cerebral Palsy Sport, Marie Curie Cancer Care and Rainbows Children's Hospice. A presentation evening on 13 November, hosted by the Vice Chairman of the County Council, Cllr John Allin, celebrated the achievements of those cyclists who raised the most sponsorship money and paid tribute to volunteers, staff, the British Red

Cross, Nottinghamshire Emergency Scout Support team and the emergency services who all helped to ensure the day was a success.

9. **Passenger Transport Forum**

Communities Department held its annual Passenger Transport Forum on 22nd November at Newstead Miners Welfare. The annual Forum is a valuable opportunity to engage with our stakeholders and complements the range of groups and local forums covering passenger transport which regularly meet throughout the County. The theme for the event was "Public Engagement and Consultation" and it sought partner and stakeholder views and ideas. Mick Burrows gave an introductory overview of the importance of consultation in the delivery of quality transport services. This was followed by presentations on the County Council's consultation database and the current consultation regarding Mansfield Bus Station. Further presentations were provided by ITP Consultants, TrentBarton Bus Company and TravelWatch East Midlands, an alliance of groups representing the consumer interest.

The event was attended by approximately 50 stakeholders and the discussions and feedback will be used to shape future delivery of transport services in the County.

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Cabinet Member for Environment

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