



Meeting **ENVIRONMENT STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE**

Date **Monday, 4 April 2005**

agenda item number

From: **Cabinet Member for Environment**

REPORT FOR PERIOD DECEMBER 2004 – JANUARY 2005

I reported the following issues to Council

on 10 February 2005:

- County-wide Bus Station Redevelopment Programme
- Mansfield Bus Station
- Retford Bus Station
- Nottingham East Midlands Airport Consultation

on 24 March 2005:

- Mansfield and Ashfield Regeneration Route
- Newark Rural Bus Challenge
- DfT Consultation on Setting Local Speed Limits
- Building Better Communities Update
- Freedomcard Smart Ticketing Systems
- Notts Coalfield – Commemorative Statue
- Nottinghamshare Car Sharing Scheme

1. Beacon Status for Sustainable Energy

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister runs the Beacon Council Scheme to identify centres of excellence from which other councils can learn. I am absolutely delighted to report that Nottinghamshire County Council's Environment Department has been awarded Beacon Status for promoting and developing sustainable energy. This is the second Beacon award for the Environment Department. The judging panel looked at:

- how the Council promotes energy efficiency amongst local communities and businesses
- its contribution to reducing carbon dioxide levels in the county
- policies for land use planning, transport and waste management to reduce energy and carbon dioxide emissions

- partnership working with energy generators, supply companies, community groups to conserve energy and limit harm to the environment.

In addition the County Council uses “green” electricity produced from sustainable sources and was the first authority to set targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from its buildings. As Beacon winner the County Council has been awarded some £67,000 to fund a number of events during the year in order to share best practice.

2. **Building Better Communities Update**

I am pleased to be able to confirm that towards the end of the early action year some 235 projects have been identified at a cost of almost £5m. Currently some 61% are complete or in progress and the remaining schemes have been programmed for delivery by the end of the financial year.

Recent footway improvements to Russley Road, Bramcote marked the completion of the 100th Scheme. This is a huge achievement and I would like to offer my thanks to everyone involved.

Skegby: a shabby grassed area at the junction of Mansfield Road and Forest Road which was a haven for illegally parked vehicles has been transformed with new block paving, railings and new street and road signs. Further railings and cast iron seating has been installed opposite the site at the junction of Pleasley Road and Mansfield Road.

Dunham on Trent: the pavements along Laneham Road from the A57 To Dunham on Trent primary school have been resurfaced with dropped crossing for disabled people and parents with pushchairs. The pavements were in a poor state of repair making the surface uneven for pedestrians and children using the school. The improvements have greatly enhanced the appearance of the area outside the school.

Kirkby-in-Ashfield: the Summit Centre on Pavilion Road has received funding from BBC to help improve access to the community facility and to improve the appearance of the grounds. A new pavement will be created to the main entrance, perimeter fencing will be installed to contain sporting activities on the outdoor games area, and overgrown vegetation will be cleared and replaced with new planting. The improvements will make a big difference to the entrance and surrounding area and will hopefully encourage more local people to use the centre.

3. **“Respect for Transport” Initiative**

The Greater Nottingham Partnership (GNP) is a strategic partnership bringing together local authorities, businesses, agencies, voluntary and

community groups from the conurbation. The partnership has a vision for 2010 called "Respect for Nottingham" which seeks to tackle problems blighting the conurbation and "Respect for Transport" (RfT) is an element of this initiative. RfT brings together representatives of those organisations concerned with developing public transport and ensuring the safety of operators and the public. Current partners include Nottingham City Council, Nottingham City Transport, the Police, NET and The Big Wheel.

Partners have signed "pledges" which outline the actions their organisations already take which support the aims of the scheme and can be promoted under the RfT banner. The RfT can also bid for funding from the GNP.

As a future partner additional funding opportunities would be available to the County Council which could support investment and improvements in key public transport infrastructure and services. I have agreed, therefore, that the County Council should join the RfT initiative and sign a pledge stating our current activities which support the aims of the initiative.

4. **A1 Peterborough to Blyth: Five Lanes End Junction Improvements**

I have reported previously that the Highways Agency (HA) is proposing to replace each of the three at-grade roundabouts on the Nottinghamshire section of the A1 with grade separated junctions. The preferred scheme for Blyth was announced in March 2003 and the announcement for Markham Moor is expected in Spring 2005.

An exhibition of proposals for Five Lanes End was held in March 2003 and the County Council had a number of concerns including circulating traffic speeds, visibility for merging traffic and lay-by provision. The HA has now announced the preferred option which incorporates a number of modifications to address some of the County Council's original concerns. The scheme will provide a two level junction and a new link road, carried over the A1 by a new bridge, will connect the existing roundabout with a new roundabout to the east of the A1. This new roundabout will also provide a link to the B6420 Mansfield Road.

Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, construction of this improvement is likely to start in 2006/07.

5. **School Bus Camera Systems**

Currently some 11,000 pupils travel to school each day on 270 buses provided by private operators. Bus companies are increasingly reluctant to undertake such work due to poor behaviour and increasingly the County Council can be placed in a difficult position when trying to take remedial action without any first hand evidence on

which to act. Over a number of years the Council has installed cameras on specific “hot spot” school buses on an ad hoc basis.

However, during 2003/04 a formal programme of installations was approved as a pilot to measure the value of expanding the scheme. Rather than taking a scattergun approach, the pilot concentrated on individual schools where each bus could be fitted. Three schools participated, covering 17 vehicles. All participants who took part in the pilot considered it a great success, with a notable reduction in incidents and all wish the scheme to continue and expand.

In view of this I have agreed that the scheme be expanded to cover a further 50-60 buses serving 7 schools. As a result CCTV systems will be fitted to 29% of the school bus fleet.

6. **Bridgford Lynx Bus Service**

In July of last year I reported to Council that the Authority's Passenger Transport Group had identified a flexible and innovative way of responding to local need in West Bridgford. There have been longstanding calls for improved daytime services to link the peripheral supermarkets, education and leisure facilities, town centre and residential areas.

The contract for local school bus services in West Bridgford is due for re-tendering. By looking at all the resources available in the area, it has been possible to redesign the current tenders for school bus services to meet school journey commitments, and also to provide a regular ‘figure of eight’ local bus service.

This innovative service was due to be introduced in February 2005. However, due to delays in the EU procurement process the service has been delayed and will now be introduced on a temporary basis on 29 March 2005. The temporary contract will operate until October 2005 during which time patronage and revenue can be assessed. The project will significantly improve travel opportunities for people living in the West Bridgford area.

7. **Bilsthorpe Household Waste and Recycling Centre**

The Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Bilsthorpe was developed in the 1980s with the adjacent landfill site. It handles some 3,600 tonnes of waste per year of which some 51% is recycled. The HWRC planning approval is linked to the life of the landfill site and this is due to close in 2006.

Over the last eighteen months the Authority has been investigating possible alternative locations and has concluded that only one suitable site exists. This is within Bilsthorpe and is only a quarter of a mile from the existing site. It is owned by the County Council and is within the

Bilsthorpe industrial area. The new site will be similar to the existing site, but with a larger dedicated area for materials that can be recycled.

I have agreed that a planning application should be submitted.

8. **A60 Mansfield Road, Arnold**

The Thackeray's Lane cycle route currently ends at its junction with Mansfield Road and there is currently no controlled crossing in place to allow cyclists or pedestrians to cross the northern leg of the junction safely. There have been 18 accidents at this location since 2000 three of which involved pedestrians or cyclists. I have agreed that a toucan crossing will be installed which will form a continuous link between the existing cycle routes on Valley Road and Thackeray's Lane.

To combat the potential for queues to form at peak periods and reduce the risk of shunt type accidents, a "No Right Turn" Order will be introduced to prevent southbound vehicles turning into Ribblesdale Road at the junction. The Order will be experimental for 18 months which will allow the effects of the ban to be monitored.

9. **Minerals Policy Statement 1**

The Government is phasing out its Planning Policy and Mineral Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs and MPGs) and replacing them with a series of planning and mineral policy statements (PPSs and MPSs). The new statements aim to be clearer and shorter. The most radical changes are those affecting MPGs. There are currently 14 which are prone to repetition and inconsistency. Under the new system there will be just 3 MPSs and MPS1 on minerals planning has been released by the ODPM for consultation, along with a draft Good Practice Guide.

MPS1 sets out the Government's sustainable development objectives for minerals planning. The overall message remains broadly the same: sustainable development means using minerals in the most efficient way possible and finding resources that can be worked with the least environmental impact. I have approved the response on behalf of the Authority. In summary, the overall style and approach of both documents is acceptable, well presented and should facilitate the preparation of development plans. Separating out policy from guidance and background information has, on balance, succeeded.

10. **The Minerals and Waste Development Framework – Statement of Community Involvement**

In January 2005 Cabinet approved the draft Minerals and Waste Development Scheme which sets out the County Council's 3 year programme for preparing the Minerals and Waste Development Framework. One of the first priorities is the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This will set out the

Council's proposals for involving and consulting the local community and other interested parties in the preparation of all Development Plan documents and planning applications that the County Council is responsible for determining. The SCI must go through various stages of public consultation culminating in an independent examination before it is adopted.

I have agreed that the first stage in this process should begin with an informal consultation with relevant stakeholders around a short summary issues paper. Following this stage a draft SCI will be prepared and reported to Environment Select Committee and Cabinet. Once approved, a further stage of public consultation will begin.

11. **Consultation on the Implementation of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive**

From August 2005 the UK is required to implement the European Union Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive. This will mean that producers, importers and retailers will be responsible for establishing a collection network for items such as PCs, digital cameras, vacuum cleaners, videos recorders etc at the end of their life. Old equipment collected through this network will have to be treated, recycled or recovered. The reason for this legislation is that almost all such equipment contains hazardous substances such as lead, mercury or CFCs and at least one million tonnes of electronic equipment is thrown away each year.

DEFRA are consulting on ways to implement the WEEE Directive. Currently householders can take their used electrical items to the Household Waste and Recycling Centres where they are collected in the same container as the scrap metal. The County Council would favour a scheme that allows this approach to continue. If there was a requirement to sort the equipment by type, this would not be possible without major refurbishment of the recycling centres and, in some cases, relocation. I have endorsed a response on behalf of the County Council.

Councillor Terry Butler
Cabinet Member for Environment