

Ian Stewart
Programme Manager
Services Group
Darlington Borough Council

6th January 2022

Dear Ian,

Darlington Station Upgrade

I am writing to offer my strong and continued support to Darlington Borough Council for the Darlington Station upgrade project – a project which is of strategic importance for the whole Tees Valley region and is identified as a key priority in our economic and transport strategies.

As an indication of the importance of this upgrade for the whole Tees Valley and our commitment to its delivery, in November 2018 the Cabinet of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), which I lead, approved a £25million contribution from TVCA funding towards the Darlington scheme. This committed funding is from TVCA's Integrated Transport Programme. In order to ensure that progress is maintained and the scheme is delivered in the required timescales, TVCA is also now proposing that an additional local contribution of up to £8million is made available, should this be required as a contingency. This will be from TVCA's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS).

Due to its location on the East Coast Main Line (ECML), Darlington is an important rail gateway for the Tees Valley as it provides key rail connectivity to numerous locations across the UK, as well as providing local connectivity throughout the Tees Valley.

It is vital for the growth of the Tees Valley economy that we have fast and efficient national rail links as provided on the ECML, and on the routes connecting to it, which can be expanded to support this growth. It is therefore concerning that rail service provision, both national and local, is now being put at risk due to capacity constraints on the ECML.

The upgrade of Darlington Station will play a vital role in lifting these constraints and allowing growth to take place. It will provide more platform capacity for ECML services so that these can be expanded and more stops can be made at Darlington in the future. This will avoid the potential trade-offs between services and stops that are being mooted at present.

Crucially the upgrade will also provide new platforms and station facilities for local Tees Valley services, meaning that not all services will need to continue to cross the ECML and conflict with mainline services. This will allow new local services to be introduced which currently can't be accommodated due to the constraints at Darlington.

The upgrade at Darlington is therefore fundamental in delivering these additional rail services which in turn are vital in supporting the growth of the Tees Valley economy.

However, the benefits that the project will deliver are not just related to the operation of rail services. The upgrade will provide significant benefits to rail passengers and to the local economy of Darlington too.


Currently many of the facilities at Darlington are not of the quality that would be expected at such an important regional hub station. The project will directly address this by delivering a new station building, with multi-modal connections, to the east of the existing station, a new transport interchange and multi-storey car park adjacent to the new station building and improved transport interchange facilities on the western side of the station. This will deliver significant direct benefits including:

- Increasing the visibility and accessibility of the station from all key approaches.
- Providing much better links between the station and Darlington town centre.
- Providing much better links between the station and the adjacent Central Park, a major centre for employment and education.
- Providing the opportunity for much improved bus interchange by the removal of significant existing constraints that currently prevent this.
- Providing much better links with the surrounding pedestrian and cycling networks and improved cycle parking facilities.
- Providing a more fit-for-purpose Station Car Park that is much more integrated within the Station than the current parking provision.

This investment will transform the current station into a high quality transport hub which will be a major asset for Darlington and the wider Tees Valley. In doing so the whole experience for passengers and other visitors to the station will also be transformed.

The CPO is a vital step in making this happen so for all the reasons outlined I and TVCA continue to fully support the delivery of the upgrade at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Houchen
Tees Valley Mayor