

Press release: Green light for North Tyneside sea defence scheme

A revised scheme to strengthen and safeguard sea defences – which has saved more than £1m of public money – has been given the go-ahead.

North Tyneside Council's Planning Committee has approved proposals for the sea defence scheme at the Central Lower Promenade in Whitley Bay, which will protect homes, businesses and the surrounding area.

It means vital work can now get underway to refurbish the structure, which is around 100 years old and is reaching the end of its serviceable life.

Elected Mayor Norma Redfearn said:

This is yet more great news for Whitley Bay. The Central Lower Promenade really needs important structural work to be carried out and the general appearance of the area is in need of improvement.

The scheme promises to achieve just that by strengthening and safeguarding sea defences and giving this stretch of the coastline a major boost. It will also save a significant amount of public money and takes into account ideas and suggestions raised by residents.

The revised scheme, which has received strong public support, involves building a new rear wall and strengthening the existing sea wall on the lower promenade.

It was drawn up after the Mayor decided the original plans and proposed price was unacceptable and a value for money exercise was carried out, which has resulted in savings of more than £1m.

It has also allowed the opportunity to include some suggestions from residents.

The project, which is being funded jointly by the council and partners Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency, will be carried out in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Council.

An open space will be created on the lower walkway with new seating, providing a great opportunity for leisure activities and events.

The design also incorporates a commercial opportunity for 'pop-up' style stalls/units on the lower promenade.

The wide upper footway will be refurbished and enhanced while the design also includes the Mayor's commitment to replacing the balustrades.

The work, which is due to be complete in winter 2017, will complement the improvements being made to the Northern Promenade.

The Central Lower Promenade scheme is part of the council's £36m Seafront Master Plan, which aims to breathe new life into the coast between Cullercoats Bay and St Mary's Island.

As part of the Master Plan, restoration work to return the Spanish City Dome to its former glory is continuing apace, a new Premier Inn is nearing completion next door, improvement work – including new surfacing and seating – is taking place along the Northern Promenade, efforts are underway to secure funding to refurbish St Mary's Lighthouse and a number of private sector schemes are also underway.

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News story: Air Quality Grant programme

Projects across the country will benefit from almost £3.7 million as part of an annual funding scheme to help combat air quality locally, it was announced today.

The Air Quality Grant programme has awarded more than £52 million to a variety of projects since it started in 1997 and helps local authorities tackle air quality in their areas to reduce the impact on people's health and create cleaner and healthier environments.

This year's Air Quality Grant programme for 2016/17 will focus on supporting schemes set up to tackle nitrogen dioxide levels, and include:

- £163,100 for electric vehicle charging and infrastructure improvements and an electric vehicle car club in East Herts
- £498,600 for a Clean Air Zone study by Bristol and South Gloucestershire councils
- £400,000 to support Nottingham trial fuel cell technology and encourage ultra-low emission vehicles in the local NHS

Environment Minister Therese Coffey said:

"Tackling poor air quality is a priority for the government and we are working closely with Local Authorities so they can play a crucial role in this.

"I was delighted at the broad range of ideas submitted, from using the latest technology to promoting cleaner taxis and increasing the uptake of electric vehicles, and these projects will help to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in our towns and cities, both now and in the future."

Transport Minister John Hayes said:

"We are determined to cut emissions and improve air quality for communities across the country; as a father of two, I would want no less for any family than I'd want for my own. These grants will help councils take significant practical steps to clean up the air and to improve communal wellbeing in their area.

"This good work will sit alongside the government's draft air quality plan which will be published in the spring."

The government is firmly committed to improving the UK's air quality and cutting harmful emissions and its air quality plan will go out to consultation later this year.

More than £2 billion has already been committed since 2011 to increase the

uptake of ultra-low emissions vehicles and support greener transport schemes and set out how it will improve air quality through a new programme of Clean Air Zones. In last year's Autumn Statement, a further £290m was allocated to support electric vehicles, low emission buses and taxis, and alternative fuels.

Local Authority	Project	Amount £
Birmingham City Council	Parking reform to reduce traffic in city centre combined with awareness raising	350,000
Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council	Clean Air Zone feasibility study	498,600
Cornwall County Council	Fitting council vehicles with oxy-hydrogen electrolyzers	236,650
Derby City Council	Retro-fitting of Council's HGV fleet with emissions reduction technology	250,000
Derby City Council	Cleaner taxis research and engagement programme	29,750
Doncaster Council (with Barnsley MBC, Rotherham MBC and Sheffield City Council)	Demonstration of electric vehicles with a local communication and engagement campaign to increase uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles	100,000
East Herts Council	EV charging and infrastructure improvements and EV car club	163,100
Gateshead Council	Traffic management measures, fleet upgrade and improved cycling infrastructure	395,957
Leeds City Council	Research real-world emissions from road transport refrigeration equipment and possible mitigations	150,000
Leicester City Council	Work-based active travelling local campaign	67,300
London Borough of Islington	Local school focussed awareness and engagement campaign	50,000
Nottingham City Council	Trial of innovative fuel cell technology within the Council's property portfolio	200,000
Nottingham City Council	Improve the uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles in NHS fleet	200,000
Sheffield City Council	Air Aware communications campaign (engaging local GPs, community groups and schools)	50,000
Southampton City Council (with Eastleigh Borough Council)	Supporting the uptake of low emission taxis	253,880
Southampton City Council	Eco-safe driver training and installation of telematics on council fleet	99,000

Local Authority	Project	Amount £
Southampton City Council (with Birmingham City Council, Derby City Council, Leeds City Council, Manchester City Council and Nottingham City Council)	Air quality awareness and engagement campaign	539,120
Westminster City Council (with London Borough of Camden)	Provide advice and toolkits for SMEs to reduce transport emissions from deliveries associated with their operations	54,077
TOTAL		3,687,434

[Employers shouldn't be allowed to break their promises on pensions – Debbie Abrahams](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, commented on the Governments Defined Benefit Green Paper, said:

"Moves to allow employers to erode the value of their workers' pensions, which could reportedly cost 11 million pensioners thousands of pounds, are absolutely unacceptable.

"Employers shouldn't be allowed to break their promises on pensions and we will not stand by while the Government gives the green light to companies to downgrade them.

"The Tories are letting older people down, Labour will fight to guarantee a secure retirement."