

Tuesday 28th April 2026

Our ref: 260428FW

Councillor David Staveley (Chair)
Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, North
Yorkshire Council

Dear Councillor Staveley,

**Scrutiny Report: Highways Maintenance Capital Funding 26/27 to 29/30 – Road Safety
Element**

I understand the committee is due to meet tomorrow to discuss the above report and am writing to provide the committee with some additional clarifications. Fatalities and serious injuries on our roads are devastating for those directly and indirectly affected. They also take a terrible toll on emergency workers who have to respond to them. As committee members may be aware, since his election in 2024, Mayor David Skaith and I have been consistent in our commitment to improve road safety in York and North Yorkshire. Our Police and Crime and Fire and Rescue plans include an objective of achieving ‘Vision Zero’ road deaths because we believe that one person losing their life on North Yorkshire’s roads is one too many. We have also sought to optimise the opportunities from additional capital investment via the Combined Authority transport capital fund for this work.

The scale of the road network in North Yorkshire (9,000km of roads) means progress on road safety cannot be delivered by any single organisation acting alone. It requires coordinated action from all partner bodies. I have always sought to work collaboratively on this issue; meeting with the transport leads from both local authorities and over 50 parishes from across York and North Yorkshire to hear their concerns as well as dozens of individual campaign groups and individual residents. And I have been extremely heartened to see the progress made by both local authorities on speed limits around schools and in villages for example. However, I don’t see this as a panacea but an opportunity for additional progress.

Separately, the national road safety strategy published at the start of the year provided the York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership with an opportunity to review how it works and how to ensure work optimises the opportunities to make further progress. The Mayor and I believe that combined, these things could have an important impact on road safety in our region.

I would like to make the following observations based on the published report:

1. Overall my concern is that the report appears to be seeking a broad continuation of current arrangements. This would be disappointing and, I believe, out of step with many local residents, schools and parish councils. The status quo will not achieve the public safety improvements we should all be aiming to achieve.
2. Section 6: re fatal road collisions: While deaths have reduced from around 50 to 60 deaths per year in the 2000’s to lower levels more recently, the reality over the last five years is continued fluctuation, with fatalities ranging from 23 to 40 per year — not consistently 20 to 30 as stated in the report. The unusually low figure in 2024 is likely an

anomaly, influenced by factors such as poor summer weather and more worryingly, 2025 has seen a sharp increase. Excluding the 2024 outlier year, the trend in fatalities between 2014 and 2023 is essentially flat. This mirrors the assessment from the national road safety strategy that progress to reduce road deaths has stalled over 10 years. The Mayor and I are not content with flatlining progress and want to see further, evidence based measures taken to reduce this number.

3. I'm concerned that the evidence from the local academic reviews, commissioned by the York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership, has been used selectively in the report before you and would urge committee members to consider these reports in full. The first review was been published and can be found here: [Road Safety Enforcement Review - Newcastle University](#). For example, it's important to ensure comparison with neighbouring areas like West Yorkshire are made appropriately. Given West Yorkshire's denser urban road network and higher inherent collision exposure, it is reasonable to conclude that, without speed cameras, collision, fatality and serious injury levels would likely have been higher than observed. The similarity between West and North Yorkshire's fatality and serious injury rates therefore does not demonstrate a lack of effectiveness, but may instead indicate that enforcement has mitigated additional underlying risk.

Safety Cameras

Speed is one of the most prevalent causes of fatalities and serious injuries on our roads and there is overwhelming local, UK and international evidence that speed cameras reduce vehicle speeds, collisions and fatal or serious injuries. In 2023 around 1 in 5 fatal collisions involved illegal speeding, but more than 1 in 2 fatal collisions involved speed in some form, including drivers travelling legally but too fast for conditions.

6.32 of the report before the Committee states, *"NYP operates 12 safety camera vans (SCV) using speed and collision data to identify sites. Recent independent academic review concluded a 36% reduction in casualties since 2013 due to their use. The study also reported that in the context of other mobile SCV operations across the country, this evaluation was extremely positive."* This welcome casualty reduction relates specifically to a very limited sample of approximately 50 camera sites reviewed by the academic study and should not be interpreted as a reduction in overall road traffic casualties across North Yorkshire since 2013.

The road safety partnership academic review concludes, *"Studies on fixed cameras reveal (on average) a similar level of success to mobile cameras studies on the effectiveness of fixed cameras are more plentiful in the literature. The public perception of average speed cameras is more positive than traditional (fixed) cameras, in terms of their effectiveness, with supporting evidence of their efficacy. Although it is accepted that average cameras have the most significant impact on the reduction of speed-related collisions, they are the most costly to operate. We believe there is a case for further study into the merits of average speed cameras in North Yorkshire; with the caveat that a mix of fixed and average speed cameras may be required to ensure a sustainable business model."*

These conclusions are the reason for a proposed business case to the road safety partnership to support a blended approach of mobile and fixed/average safety cameras, utilising the transport capital funding agreed by the Combined Authority in March 2026.

Support for this approach is not confined to research papers and evidence. Communities across North Yorkshire have consistently raised road safety as a top priority and urged action. The approach the Mayor and I have sought to take is evidence based; with limited numbers of fixed and average speed enforcement cameras located to have the optimum impact on public safety, in conjunction with other enforcement measures, other measures such as engineering, education, and working with local partners such as schools and parish councils.

To me the data and tragic road safety figures each year are compelling evidence that the current approach is not enough. Mayor David Skaith and I worked hard to ensure funding could be made available for a small number of static and average safety cameras to help improve the safety of our roads. The operational delivery of new investment rests with the road safety partnership that North Yorkshire Council is a key member of.

It would be welcome if the Committee could add its support to the wider strategic approach the road safety partnership is taking and specifically to the introduction of a small number of static and average speed cameras in the areas where they could have the biggest impact on road safety.

Finally, I hope the Committee can recognise and support the approach the Mayor and I have sought to take on road safety – working collaboratively and constructively with road safety partners.

Yours sincerely,



Jo Coles

Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime

York and North Yorkshire