

Bypass will ease congestion in rural Yorkshire



Looking east from the A1(M) towards Northallerton

ON 11 AUGUST the first vehicles drove the three-mile length of the brand new Bedale bypass in North Yorkshire. The bypass is designed to ease congestion by reducing traffic through the villages of Bedale, Leeming Bar and Aiskew by half – from approximately 14,000 vehicles a day. It will also reduce environmental and road safety problems, improve access to the A1(M) for local communities and improve access to a local industrial estate.

The new road was officially opened by Roads Minister Andrew Jones, who commented: "The much-needed bypass will improve the community's lives by cutting traffic and improving air quality and road safety. The tourist industry will also benefit as journey times to the beautiful Yorkshire Dales will be reduced. The government is making a record investment in roads, such as the Bedale bypass, speeding up people's journeys and boosting the economy."

After Mr Jones cut the ribbon, he and other invited guests drove the length of the bypass in a coach, opening the road to traffic behind them.

The bypass – planned and designed by Jacobs – runs from Northallerton Road, on the eastern outskirts of Leeming Bar, to a new junction on the A684 near Bedale Golf Club. It crosses the A1(M) at approximately its midpoint, where it connects with the junction created as part of Highways England's A1 Disforth to Barton upgrade.

Main contractor Willis Bros began work in February last year and finished about two months ahead of the anticipated completion this autumn. The project, which was budgeted at about £34.5m, is also expected to come in under budget. The Department for Transport provided £29m, with North Yorkshire County Council funding the rest.

"The bypass has been long-awaited and will greatly reduce congestion in Bedale, as well as Leeming Bar and Aiskew," said County Councillor Don Mackenzie, the Executive Member for Highways. "It will make a huge difference to residents, businesses and tourists and is an example of the county council's commitment to improving road connections across the county to support the economy and make North Yorkshire a good place to live, work and visit."

"The scheme is expected to come in under budget, which has been noted by the Department for Transport and the Treasury, as few major infrastructure schemes are delivered under budget. This is a fantastic piece of work by Willis Bros Ltd, Jacobs and North Yorkshire County Council."

"Brown tourism signs have been erected on the approaches to the roundabout at the Bedale end of the bypass to encourage tourists to visit

Bedale as part of their trip to the county. The market town will be an even more attractive place to explore following the reduction in through traffic."

Bedale's County Councillor, John Weighell, added: "Like me, local people will have watched Bedale bypass taking shape over the past 18 months and I'm sure they will be keen to use it to make their journeys easier. For businesses, it will improve access to the Leeming Bar Industrial Estate and for visitors will open up easier access to the Dales. For those living in Bedale, Leeming Bar and Aiskew, it will also improve road safety and the environment, particularly by reducing the traffic flow past homes in Aiskew."

The contractors had to deal with poor ground conditions, particularly into the high embankments on the bridge approaches. The design caters for the settlement of these embankments over an extended period of time and the programme of works allowed for a future visit to smooth out the carriageway surface once settlement had ceased.



Holmfild Bridge and Northallerton Roundabout

A Roman villa uncovered during the project has been designated as an ancient monument. The Aiskew villa is one of the most northerly in Britain and for a northern villa is exceptionally large and complex. It includes a main building with a wide range of features and a large complex of other buildings and enclosures.

The site was thoroughly explored and the finds are being assessed and catalogued. It has provided well-preserved finds, including bone and ironwork, and could provide considerable information about a significant villa in 3rd and 4th-century Yorkshire. It is hoped some of the finds will be displayed locally and could be made available for schools to study. □

Photos ©North Yorkshire County Council

Access for plant involved specialist engineering

THE CONSTRUCTION OF the Bedale Bypass involved heavy plant crossing the Wensleydale Railway. In order to facilitate that plant movement, a number of heavy duty crossing points had to be installed over the tracks and Will Bros commissioned specialist contractor Premier Rail Services to carry out the work.

The installation happened at the beginning of the project, enabling the essential heavy plant and equipment to cross the running railway.

Premier Rail was established in 1997 and has expanded to become the largest installer and supplier of specialist access equipment on the UK railway infrastructure. The company works directly for Network Rail and for the majority of the other top-tier railway contractors. □

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The Rectory Wood Bridge